









THE INTELLECTUAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF SCOTLAND



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THE MAN AND HIS WORK," ETC.

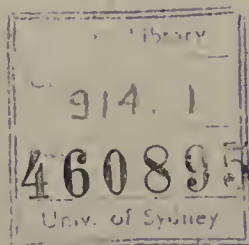
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HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

A 2,626- MS 1911

RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,  
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E.,  
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.





TO

SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON NICOLL

WHOSE UNTIRING DEVOTION TO THE HIGHER IDEALS OF SCOTTISH  
THOUGHT AND LIFE THROUGHOUT A PUBLIC CAREER OF  
CONSPICUOUS SUCCESS HAS GAINED FOR HIM  
THE ENDURING ADMIRATION OF HIS  
FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN



## PREFACE

ABOUT the various phases of the intellectual life of Scotland much has been written, but so far as I know there has been no attempt to deal with the subject as a connected whole. In regard to the scientific side of the national development, I have been greatly indebted to the Principal of Edinburgh University, Sir William Turner, who in his recent address to the Royal Society of Edinburgh sketched in masterly manner the rise and progress of scientific study in Scotland. This department of the national life has been somewhat overshadowed by our theological and ecclesiastical controversies; and, judging from Sir William Turner's illuminating survey, an entire volume is needed to do justice to the subject.

In my book I have not aimed at exhaustiveness of treatment; the aim has been the more modest one of noting the salient points in the

evolutionary process, and my reward will be great if the reader is sent to study in detail the subjects with which the volume deals.

Much of the material has appeared in various public prints, the *Glasgow Herald*, *T. P.'s Weekly* and the late *Scottish Review*, the editors of which I cordially thank for their permission to reproduce the articles.

H. M.

*October 1911.*

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THE STARTING-POINT :  
THE REFORMATION



## CHAPTER I

### THE STARTING-POINT: THE REFORMATION

IN dealing with a nation's Intellectual Development the historian has two courses open to him. As the present writer has elsewhere remarked, an historical student may content himself with splitting his subject into sections and dealing with each section in the spirit of a narrator pure and simple. On the other hand, he may essay the more difficult task of seizing the dynamic principle of intellectual development and tracing its working through the various sections of thought and life. The value of the latter method, if successfully applied, is that history, instead of being a chaos of unrelated facts, is seen to be an intelligible and luminous evolution. We discover the relations which exist between the various factors in a nation's history:

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theology, philosophy, science, literature, by means of the dynamic principle, are seen to be bound together in organic unity.

What, then, is the dynamic principle of historical evolution? In the opening chapter of the present writer's *Century of Intellectual Development* an answer was given to this important question—an answer which as being applicable to the subject under consideration may fitly be reproduced: "Taking a large view of history it will be found that man's intellect is mainly occupied upon three great problems—God, the universe, and man as an individual and a social being. The controlling factor in the process is man's conception of the Unseen Power upon which all things rest, and of which nature and man are manifestations. If we conceive of the Unseen Power as a supernatural Being, who by revelations has made known his will to man, then philosophy, science and literature will be moulded by, and permeated with, that conception. Even the social order will feel its powerful influence. Society will be framed on theocratic lines on the principle of authority." There comes a time when the principle of

authority—valuable at a certain stage in civilization—weighs heavily on the social order, and by stereotyping ideas and institutions results in intellectual and social stagnation. In the sixteenth century, under the sway of Romanism, the intellectual and social life of Europe suffered what may be termed arrested development. In the interest of humanity it was necessary that the barriers to progress should be thrown down. The great liberating movement which changed the current of European thought and activity is known in history as the Reformation. From it we date the beginning of Scotland's intellectual evolution.

There are those who contend that in Scotland the Reformation was detrimental to the intellectual movement. It may be well, therefore, to deal with the oft-repeated charge that the Reformation killed the germs of Humanism which under James IV gave promise of brilliant development. That reign has been described as "the golden age of Scottish poetry." Why was the golden age so short-lived? The answer of the anti-Reformation school is that the golden age disappeared in the epidemic

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of gloomy and intolerant fanaticism of the religion of Knox and his successors. The explanation is altogether wide of the mark. The outburst of literary genius at the time of James IV was not the herald of a new day, the early rays of the rising sun. Rather was it the declining splendour of approaching night, the fitful gleams of the setting sun. The literature of the "golden age" had no future, simply because in a time when society was passing out of the feudal stage it gave expression to sentiments and ideals which beyond court circles had no hold upon men's hearts. Before there is a national literature there must first be a nation, and to the making of a nation there go three things—unity of belief, unity of sentiment, and unity of feeling. During the pre-Reformation period Scotland was not a nation; it was a collection of warring atoms. Unity of belief was absent, because there was a revolt of the thinking section of the people against the doctrines and practices of the Romish Church. Unity of sentiment and feeling there could not be in the absence of unity of belief. Any literary movement under these conditions was bound to be

evanescent. It lacked the fundamental element of durability.

In his volume, *The Transition Period*, in the European Literature series, Mr. Gregory Smith has the following corroborative remarks—

“ With the reign of James IV we enter on the classic period of Scots poetry. In some respects it illustrates a mere access of high spirits in companionship with sudden violence and social exuberance—a kind of carnival before the Lenten fastings of the sixteenth century. . . . It does not even inspire any patriotic verse, such as we find in the days of Queen Bess. In Scotland, on the other hand, poetry was the expression of the narrower life of the court, and the influences which it felt were specific and personal. Literature,” adds Mr. Smith, “ was confined, almost to the exclusion of everything else, in the directly allegorical mood of a dying tradition.”

Rightly understood, there can be no durable literature apart from a healthy national life; and in the evolution of the Protestant religion in Scotland the first clearly-marked stage was the creation of a healthy national life. In these days we have come to think



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of religion as a thing solely between man and his Maker. This is entirely a modern idea. At the time of the Reformation, and till long after, religion was a matter of State concern as well as an individual affair. When the Reformers denied the right of Rome to close the approach of man to his Maker except through priestly mediation, they brought to the front the modern idea that man as man has certain fundamental religious rights, with which no Church on earth had the right to tamper. But the Roman Catholic Church claimed that right, and, what was more, claimed to have the power of coercion, which it did not scruple to exercise over nations as well as individuals.

The question which confronted the Reformers was this: If the people as such have the right to worship God apart from priestly mediation and Romanist practices generally, what should be their attitude to Romanism, which claimed the right to put down liberty of conscience by despotic exercise of civil and political power? The answer of Knox was decisive—the attitude of a Protestant people to the claim of Rome must be one of



resistance. Loyalty to God meant disloyalty to the existing State, and in the struggle which ensued it followed that the success of the new religion was impossible except by making the State Protestant instead of Romanist. This is the key to the policy of Knox, whose remark that he feared the celebration of Mass by Mary at Holyrood more than ten thousand armed men has been cited by drawing-room critics of the kid-gloved type as a specimen of the Reformer's ferocious intolerance. What Knox saw, and saw clearly, was that the public recognition of Romanist practices was calculated to increase the influence of the Romanist Church to the detriment of Protestantism.

How was Rome to be fought? Not by isolated individuals, but by the co-operation of those who believed that not only religion, but civil and political liberty were at stake. The three great nation-making forces—unity of belief, of feeling, and of sentiment, came into play, and thus in the course of the evolution of the Protestant religion there also evolved the Protestant State. It is a favourite contention of a certain class of writers that

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in substituting Protestantism for Romanism Scotland simply substituted one form of despotism for another—the despotism of the theocratic regime of Geneva for that of Rome. Where is the difference, it is asked, between an infallible Pope and an infallible book? The answer is plain. The one crushes intellectual vitality in the germ by insisting upon abject acceptance of ecclesiastical and theological decrees, while the other, by making a book the standard, sends the individual in an interpretative mood to the standard, by which he tests the dogmas of the Church and the conduct of her leaders. Once the right of private judgment is recognized it extends to all departments, thereby greatly stimulating the intellectual life of a people.

In Scotland the Reformation did its work with great thoroughness. In this respect Scotland contrasts favourably with England and Germany. In England the work of the Reformers was arrested long before the controversy with Rome was logically finished; while in Germany Lutheranism retained something of the spirit and tendencies of Romanism. Political conditions had much to do with the

different forms which the Reformed religion assumed in the three countries; but the success of Scotland is mainly to be attributed to the fact that it confronted Romanism with a life-system as comprehensive as its own. It is sometimes claimed for Protestantism in Scotland that the principal weapon with which it fought and overthrew Romanism was what is called the right of private judgment. In the religious sphere that of course meant that man as man had the right to approach God apart from the mediatorship of the Church of Rome, which not only arrogated to itself infallibility in the sphere of doctrine, but also claimed a monopoly of the conditions by which Divine blessings could descend to man. True, the Reformers in Scotland took their stand upon the principle that religion was a personal matter between man and his Maker; but had they not gone beyond this contention, they would never have shaken the entire fabric of Romanism to its foundations. Lutheranism and Anglicanism both failed in thoroughness. In Scotland alone was the victory over Romanism complete. What is the explanation? Simply

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this, that Scotland confronted Romanism with Calvinism.

Hasty students of theology are apt to identify Calvinism with certain doctrines—election, reprobation, etc.—which are highly distasteful to the modern mind. We never can come to a real understanding of Calvinism till we recognize that it stands for something much wider than a theory of the Atonement with special reference to the future condition of the non-elect. Had Calvinism been purely a theological theory, it would never have conquered Romanism. Calvinism conquered because it was presented in the form of an all-embracing life-system, by means of which it was able to combat the equally comprehensive life-system of Romanism.

Then, as now, Romanism aspired to be more than a religion. It aspired to take all phases of thought and life into its embrace; it presented itself as the interpreter of the great facts of existence—God, man, and the world. Romanism took under its care not only theology, but philosophy, science, and politics. It professed to meet not only the needs of man, but also of society. Mani-

festly such a compact system could be effectively dealt with only by another system equally compact, and more fitted to deal with the religious, theological, ecclesiastical, and political needs of the new time. It is a trite remark that in the sphere of Church government and politics Calvinism carried with it the germs of democracy; but its fundamental work at the Reformation lay in the sphere of theology. By their theory of God all religions stand or fall. The object of a man's worship, as Carlyle somewhere says, determines the character of that man. Now, the grave errors of Romanism took their rise in a conception of God essentially pagan—a conception which carried with it materialism in the shape of image-worship, superstition in the shape of belief in magical rites, and a mechanical idea of morality which easily degenerated into immorality as the result of a grossly anthropomorphic conception of God and the method of approach to Him.

If Romanism was to receive a mortal wound, the first essential was to strike at its conception of God. Calvinism did this by placing in the forefront of its creed the doctrine of



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the sovereignty of God. Calvin and Knox did for their day what the prophets did in the days of Israel—they protested against idolatry, against the dragging down of the Holy One to the level of the pagan deities, with the result of making religion a round of senseless ceremonies, and salvation not a matter of ethical purification, but of propitiation based on commercial principles. In the eyes of Calvinism image-worship and all idolatrous practices were an insult and abomination to God, who was viewed as the High and Lofty One, the Sovereign over all, the Creator of the world and of man, the stern opponent of sin, the disposer of events. In a word, what Calvinism as the first step in the Reformation did was to overthrow the pagan conceptions of God which Romanism had fostered, and to bring the mind of Scotland back to the pure and elevated notions of Deity which are to be found in the Bible. And just as we find the Jewish prophets insisting on the uprooting of idolatry by the destruction of images, so we find Knox laying special emphasis on the removal from Scotland of all outward emblems of what may be called Romanist paganism.

He saw, and saw rightly, that it was hopeless to get into the minds of the people Biblical conceptions of God so long as pagan emblems and pagan influences were tolerated. At the Reformation, then, the theological evolution of Scotland had its root in an august conception which stands in the forefront of Protestantism—the sovereignty of God, as against the pagan ideas which the Roman Catholic Church tolerated, if not encouraged.

A very important question arises here—How does the Calvinistic conception of God fare in these days of philosophy and science? Can the advanced thinkers of to-day afford to look upon the Calvinistic conception of God as good enough in past times as against the corrupt views of Rome, but altogether discredited by modern thought?

It is a striking fact that the revolt against Calvinism began not from the side of philosophy and science, but from the side of the Church. In the Scottish Church loud complaints were made of the harshness of Calvinism, in the extreme emphasis it lays upon justice to the exclusion of the tenderer attributes. The Fatherhood of God was substi-

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tuted for the Sovereignty of God. It is an equally striking fact that while a large section of the clergy were repudiating Calvinism, philosophers and scientists were paying to it unconscious tributes. The strange fact has to be recorded that the Calvinist conception of the universe is more in harmony with modern philosophic and scientific conceptions than is the Broad Church view. It is now seen that the old theologians of the Reforming and Covenanting days grappled with marked ability with the problems which occupy the minds of the Hegels and the Spencers of our own time. As I have said in my *Century of Intellectual Development*—

“The conception of the universe reached by those old Calvinists was in substance not far removed from that reached by modern German and British philosophers. The last word of philosophy, German and British, is determinism. Hegel, in the hands of Mr. Bradley, a brilliant Oxford thinker, makes short work of what is understood as free-will; and thinkers of the scientific school of Huxley are favourable to the view that man is an automaton. Now what is philosophical and



scientific determinism but Calvinistic foreordination in a new dress ? The only difference is, that modern philosophers and scientists attribute to Nature a universal necessity which has deprived man of freedom, while the Calvinists interpreted the necessity of Nature as an ordination of God. In regard to the ultimate nature of things those old Calvinists reached a view which is being endorsed by the latest philosophic and scientific interpreters. Science brings us down to atoms. Philosophy cannot rest in the atomic conception of the Cosmos. It reduces the atoms to centres of force and energy. Thus we come to the view that matter is but the phenomenal appearance of an Infinite Energy which, though unseen, is the real basis of matter, the source of life, the inspirer of law and order. Spencer's Infinite Energy, what is it but the Calvinistic essence of God, which is everywhere, directly and immediately energetic ? Hegel and Spencer can go no farther in their researches and definitions than the words of the Shorter Catechism : ' God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.' "

If the Church of to-day is to regain its influence, it will need to infuse into its teaching something of the spirit of Calvinism.

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Without losing its hold on the tender side of religion, the Church will require to impart to its theology something of the awe which filled the hearts of the old Hebrews and the Calvinists, and which fills the minds also of reverent philosophers and scientists in presence of the Infinite, the Eternal, the All-Embracing. In the words of the author of *Natural Religion* : “ If men can add once more the Christian confidence to the Hebraic (and I might add the Calvinistic) awe, the Christianity that will result will be of a higher kind than that which passes too often for Christianity now, which, so far from being love added to fear, and casting out fear, is a presumptuous and effeminate love that never knew fear.”

From the anthropological point of view it is quite correct to speak of the Reformation as destroying the whole system of sacerdotal mediatorship, and bringing man as man face to face with God. From the theological standpoint it is also correct to say that in Scotland, under the influence of Calvinism, the Reformation also elevated and purified the idea of God, which under Romanism had been lowered and degraded. Just as Luther brought religion

back to the Biblical idea by reviving the doctrine of Justification by Faith, so Calvin brought religion back to the Biblical idea by reviving in men's minds the idea of the glory, the majesty, and the holiness of the Creator.

Not that this idea was absent from the writings of Luther and other Reformers. What is meant is that with Calvinism the doctrine of God stands in the forefront: it is made, so to speak, the starting-point of the religious life, and of a comprehensive system of thought. Luther's primary concern was with the salvation of man; Calvin's primary concern was with the glory of God. In this Calvin was strictly following in the track of the Biblical writers. What is the dominating conception of God in the Bible? Is it not that of a Being in presence of whose infinite and awful majesty the human mind instinctively bends in adoration—a Being whose favour is better than life, and in awe-stricken communion with whom is the highest bliss of which the soul of man is capable? How are we to think of this Being? We know what Romanism thought. In our day thinkers have been busy with speculations, but none of them have

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succeeded in presenting the modern mind with such a full view as that of Calvinism. The problem is to find room in a satisfying conception of God for personality. Personality, we are told, is a human attribute, and cannot be predicated of the infinite and eternal ground of the Universe. From Spinoza and Hegel to Spenceer philosophy has been baffled in the attempt to frame a conception which, while doing justice to the ideas of infinity and eternity, yet finds a place for the element of personality, without which we get no farther than a dead Universe, pursuing its purposeless way to a purposeless end.

The value of Calvinism is that, while purifying the idea of God from the errors of Romanism, it also saves it from the blank despair of an agnostic materialism, and an equally agnostic idealism. The God of Calvinism is a God whose greatness no mind can measure, but whose personality is manifested in His all-embracing purpose in nature and in history. All thinkers agree that there is Unity at the heart of things, and the latest thinkers of eminence, like Lotze, are coming round to the Calvinistic view, that to this Unity must

be attributed personality and purpose, and that in the great world-drama there is traceable a providential ordering of events. In the theological evolution of Scotland, Calvinism not only played an important part at the time of the Reformation, but it may safely be said that it embraced in its idea of God conceptions which will hold a permanent place in the theology of the immediate future. Along with the permanent elements, Calvinism contained notions which must be discarded. It aspired to a familiar reading of the Divine will, an intimacy with the Divine purpose in regard to the future of the race, which has done much to bring it into discredit, and undoubtedly did much to provoke a reaction.



## THE REACTION: MODERATISM





## CHAPTER II

### THE REACTION : MODERATISM

THE reaction against Calvinism took the form of Deism, which in Scotland became known as Moderatism. The reaction was partly due to the fact that the Reformed Church under Calvinism took much too narrow a view of its functions. Modelled on the pattern of Geneva, the Kirk was animated by the theocratic spirit. Its ideal State was more Judaic than Christian. The clergy desired to inaugurate in Scotland a reign of saints. Their ideal was a Commonwealth, the laws of which were to be formed not by secular methods, but by study of the Bible. At a time when Scotland was beginning to enter on its great industrial career, when literature and philosophy were making their influence felt, the exacting supernaturalism of the Kirk came into collision with the secular

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development of the nation, with the result that an attempt was made to so modify theology as to make it harmonize with the new intellectual and social conditions. The reaction showed itself in the Kirk early in the eighteenth century. John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, has been well described as the first notable heretic in the Scottish Church. His name is associated with two departures from Calvinism—the one in the direction of Arminianism, and the other in the direction of Unitarianism, or, as it was then called, Arianism.

My intention is not to detail the history of the various heresies in the Kirk, but rather to show the intellectual and social conditions which gave them birth. The new line of anti-Calvinistic thought is undoubtedly traceable to Francis Hutcheson, who influentially represented the reaction from what was described as the bigoted creed of the Covenanters and their fanatical enthusiasm for principles which seemed to be subversive of a well-regulated social order. Tired of the turmoil of the seventeenth century, men like Hutcheson yearned for a social state which would be

favourable to the cultivation of learning and good-fellowship.

Deism in the subtle form of Moderatism was indeed a formidable foe to Calvinism. In opposition to Calvinism, with its doctrine of election, the Hutcheson school, after the style of Shaftesbury, postulated the existence of a God whose ruling desire was the happiness of all His creatures; and in opposition to Calvinism, with its doctrine of human depravity, the need for spiritual regeneration as a preliminary to obedience to the Divine will and communion with God, the Hutcheson school viewed man as, on the whole, a self-reliant being, who was supplied by two guides, reason and conscience, in obedience to which he was enabled to fulfil the purpose of his being. The Moderates looked askance at enthusiasm, and greeted the ecstatic utterances of the Covenanters and their spiritual outpourings with contempt and derision. The Moderates stripped theology of all its mystical qualities; they kept to the broad-beaten paths of morality. Theological literature, like that associated with the names of Boston, Rutherford, and the field preachers—literature which dealt with the soul's direct

communion with God—was dismissed as unworthy of the consideration of rational thinkers.

And here we reach a vital point in the controversy between Calvinism and Deism, between Evangelical Protestantism and Moderatism. Calvinism with its doctrine of God, as I have shown, has stood the test of modern thought. Can its doctrine of the relation between man and God also stand the test? The deistic conception of life which underlay Moderatism seemed to make impossible the kinship of man with God, implied in such a phrase as the “mystical union.” God was viewed as existing outside of His universe, as external to it as an engineer is to an engine, or a watchmaker to a watch. God was a lawgiver, and the relation of man to Him was that of a subject to a sovereign. Now the Calvinists held that God is a universal presence, the life of nature, and the inspirer of human souls. He is not only our lawgiver, but our life—in Him we live and move and have our being. What has modern thought to say to this? The point to be noted here is that the idea which underlies the “mystical union” is an idea towards which philosophy for some

time has been tending. When Spencer broke away from the empiricism of Hume and Mill, and made the fundamental basis of his philosophy to rest not on a bare knowledge of finite details, but in recognition of an Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed, he unconsciously entered on the path which leads to mysticism, though it was of the old type, which consisted, as the late Master of Balliol well remarks, in conceiving of the Absolute in its most abstract form. Still, the mystical element is present, even as a germ, whenever, as in Spencer and in Hegel, man is viewed as part of a universal process or life.

Sooner or later the question arises, Is it possible for man, either by thought or feeling, to come into conscious union with the Source of this universal life? Hegel declared it was possible, but by mixing up the universal and the particular, the human and the divine, he substituted a pantheistic for a theistic conception of the Universe. Under the inspiration of Lotze a school of thinkers sprang up who conceived the Absolute as a universal life, which, as

“immanent in our finite and dependent life,



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renders us capable at once of philosophical thought, of religious aspiration and devotion, of ethical self-renunciation, and of that highest love which is more fundamental than all individual differences, and as it takes possession of the soul, absorbs, and so annihilates, all private egoistic claims.”

According to this philosophic conception, in the words of Professor Upton in his *Bases of Religious Belief*—

“the Supreme Object of religious belief is never entirely an inferred reality, but is even more directly apprehended in the soul’s higher life than the external world of Nature is directly apprehended in our sentient and perceptive experience. With this immediate consciousness of the Universal and Absolute is indivisibly blended the consciousness of our dependence on, and our intrinsic relationship to, this eternal Reason, this source of categorical Imperatives, this immanent presence of an all-embracing, all-unifying Love.”

Or, as Emerson puts it: “The rapture of the Moravian and the Quietist, the revival of the Calvinistic Churches, the experiences of the Methodists, are varying forms of the

shudder of awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul." Translate this into theological language, and you are not far from the mysticism of Calvinism, and you have a key to the mystical union which holds such a prominent place in the Reformed Theology.

Moderatism, with its deistical outlook and its tendency to minimize the supernatural, found a congenial environment in Scotland at the Union. With the decay of theological, ecclesiastical and political strife, the national mind woke up to the necessity of cultivating the intellectual and industrial side of life. How great was the intellectual leeway that had to be made up is seen from the following utterance of Carlyle : " For a long time after Scotland had become British we had no literature ; at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectator* our own good Thomas Boston was writing with noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man*. Then came the schisms in our national Church, and the fiercer schisms in our body politic. Theologic ink, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have

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blotted out the intellect of the country. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt at writing English, and ere long Hume, Robertson, Smith and a whole host of followers attracted hither the eyes of all Europe.” To the Moderates largely belongs the credit of the intellectual revival, whatever their defects—and they were many—in the sphere of religion. The latter half of the eighteenth century, during which Moderatism lent the weight of its influence to raising the intellectual status of Scotland, was characterized by extraordinary brilliancy. As has been well said, nowhere but in France was there so rich and varied an efflorescence of genius. As Mr. Mathieson in his really admirable work *The Awakening of Scotland* remarks : “ The England of that day produced no such philosopher as Hume; no such opponent of his scepticism as Campbell; no such historians—to adopt the contemporary verdict—as Hume and Robertson, no such biographer as Boswell; no such preacher as Blair; no such economist as Adam Smith; no such physician as Cullen; no such chemist as Black; no such engineer as Watt; and it was within this period that Robert Burns, the finest and fullest embodi-



ment of his country's genius, lived and died." It is not for a moment to be supposed that the Moderates had a monopoly of intellectual power; but they had, what the Evangelicals lacked, the genius of literary expression. The late Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) puts the matter in a nutshell in his comment upon the oblivion that has overtaken the learned productions of the leading Evangelicals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "Those theologians of the Kirk have passed into oblivion because their theology was divorced from letters. If they could have written like Hooker or Bunyan they would have lived, because they could have spoken to us in our own tongue at its best; because they wrote in a local style they have died."

In so far as the Moderates emphasized the great value of learning and literature, which the Evangelicals unduly depreciated, their influence was beneficial; but their gospel of culture, resting as it did on a superficial estimate of human nature, was bound, sooner or later, to prove its insufficiency when confronted with the grim realities of life. The French Revolution dealt Moderatism in Scot-

land—as it did Deism in England—a staggering blow. In presence of that great eruption of evil, the theory of the natural goodness of man and the all-sufficiency of reason seemed the product of a poetic imagination. Was there not in that terrible convulsion striking confirmation of the Calvinistic theory of the depravity of man? Moderatism in Scotland, which at best was confined to a small section of the clergy and laity, could not withstand the spiritual reaction caused by the French Revolution. The reaction took the form of an Evangelical revival, which had for one of its important results the bringing to the front the question of patronage, thereby leading to the Disruption.

It is significant that the leaders of the Disruption were also leaders in the Evangelical revival. The Moderates were greatly weakened when Chalmers left them, and to him and Dr. Andrew Thomson is largely due the rise of Evangelicalism in power and popularity. Nor must we forget Dr. Thomas M'Crie, who, by his intellectual penetration and his wide culture, showed that there was no necessary antagonism between Calvinism and literature.

Hugh Miller's contributions to the *Witness* further showed that it was possible to combine hearty acceptance of the Evangelical doctrines with a vivid interest in science and literature. Moreover, by his marvellous wealth of sympathy, Chalmers showed that the old Evangelicalism, which had been denounced for its narrowness, was wide enough to embrace all phases of intellectual activity, from theology to sociology. Unhappily, the controversial atmosphere of the Disruption period was not favourable to the high conception which Dr. Chalmers and Hugh Miller formed of Evangelicalism. Gradually the theological and the ecclesiastical spirit dominated the Church, the result being the divorce between religion and life, between theology, science, and literature.

How far the gulf had widened between theology and literature was seen in the uncouth form in which the Evangelical leaders presented their doctrines. In his day William Cunningham was a leading champion in the theological and ecclesiastical field. His intellectual massiveness is apparent on every page of his writings ; but the reader will search in

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vain for anything approaching sweetness and light. Men like Cunningham were so absorbed in the work of defining the relations between Church and State, and in defending and expounding the Reformed theology, that they had no time to cultivate the graces of style.

# THE CRISIS IN THEOLOGY



## CHAPTER III

### THE CRISIS IN THEOLOGY

WITH the dying down of ecclesiastical strife the Free Church settled to the work of consolidation and organization. In addition to its championship of Spiritual Independence it prided itself on being the defender of orthodoxy as against the heretical tendencies of the new Moderate party which had grown up within the Establishment. In the training of the ministry it certainly did not neglect the intellectual life. Germany attracted many of the abler students, who, overleaping provincial limitations, returned with their minds broadened by European culture. At this period in the Free Church were to be found distinguished students who combined the fervour of the Evangelicals with the intellectualism of the Moderates. In their contest with the Establishment the leaders of the Free Church, in

the rôle of defenders of the Reformed theology, took their stand upon the Confession of Faith. In this they were supported by the Churches of the Secession. Sooner or later there was bound to be collision between the old dogmatic statement of the Reformation Church and the newer views made in Germany.

The orthodox party were assailed from two opposite directions. Inside the two Evangelical Churches—the United Presbyterian and the Free—were men who did not breathe freely in the theological atmosphere. In the United Secession Church the doctrine of the Atonement, in so far as its benefits were limited to the elect, was assailed by a young minister, the Rev. James Morison, who, on being expelled from the Church, started a new sect known as the Evangelical Union. Expulsion was no remedy. The new spirit could not be exorcized by ecclesiastical measures. At a later period the spirit of revolt in the United Presbyterian Church found a representative in the Rev. David Macrae, who, for his emphatic dissent against the severe Calvinism of the Confession of Faith, was also expelled. The outcome of



the agitation was the framing of a Declaratory Act, the object of which was to give prominence to aspects of the gospel message which had not been sufficiently, if at all, emphasized in the Confession of Faith.

Meanwhile the Church of the Disruption stood firm in the paths of orthodoxy. In the Established Church were present the elements of reaction against the Evangelicalism of the Disruption period. At first the elements were not very pronounced. How reluctant that Church was to move away from the old landmarks was seen in the prosecution and expulsion of M'Leod Campbell for heretical views on the Atonement. The tendency of the Establishment, however, was towards a kind of theology which was more in sympathy with the Broad Church party in England than with Calvinism. This doctrinal movement found able exponents in men like Tulloch and Story, and, above all, in the late Dr. Caird, who, by introducing the spirit of the Hegelian philosophy into Scottish theology, managed to give a new setting to the doctrines of the Confession. The distinctive note of the Broad Church party was opposition to the somewhat narrow

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Free and United Presbyterian creed of the Churches, whose leaders had, like the old Evangelicals, drawn too sharp a distinction between the sacred and the secular, thereby making religion more a method of escape from the City of Destruction than a means of mental, moral, and spiritual equipment, with the natural outcome — a regenerated society.

So far the changes which took place in the theological evolution of Scotland were due to changes of emphasis on particular doctrines. While strongly dissenting from the ultra-Calvinism of the Disruption Church and the Secession Church, and while pleading for a wider conception of the religious life, the leaders in the Establishment did not question the fundamental belief upon which Scottish theology rested—namely, the absolute authority of the Bible as a Divine revelation. Here and there advanced preachers might talk of the human side of the Bible, and throw out hints about new views of inspiration which left room for mistakes; but when, as in the case of the once famous *Scotch Sermons*, such views were put forward in dogmatic shape,

they were repudiated by the Church. In the Establishment the Broad Church spirit was a permeating influence; but it was not strong enough to overthrow the traditional view of the Bible, the authority of which, as both the conservative and the progressive party saw, was fundamental, if the theology of the Reformation in any intelligible sense was to remain secure against attack. With an inspired and infallible Bible, differences of theological interpretation were possible; but it was felt that a blow at the authority of the Bible was a blow at the whole system of Protestantism. With all their differences, the Churches of Scotland were practically agreed in the high position which they assigned to the Bible. Individual ministers, no doubt, were familiar with certain views which were current in Germany, but they kept them pretty much to themselves. Absorbed with defining their relations to the State and in building up their Church, the men of the Disruption paid little heed to the grave problem of Biblical criticism. Occupied with controversies over the Atonement, the United Presbyterians had enough on hand without discussing questions which would

still further unsettle the minds of the people; and the leaders of the Established Church had practical and speculative problems which left no time for the consideration of questions which were sure to provoke the spirit of heresy-hunting. Such was the theological situation in Scotland when, like a bolt from the blue, came Robertson Smith's famous utterances on the Higher Criticism.

Amid all their controversies the clergy and laity of Scotland up till the time of Robertson Smith had rested comfortably on the famous saying of Chillingworth: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." To the Bible all sects appealed as the ultimate authority. With the Bible in his hand Knox overthrew Romanism. In the long conflict with Episcopacy, from the days of Andrew Melville till Renwick, the last of the martyrs who perished on the scaffold, the Covenanters drew the inspiration for their heroic fight from the pages of the Bible. In their contest with the Moderates the Evangelicals always made their appeal to the Bible; and at the Disruption both parties drew arguments from the Bible in support of their respective theories

of Church and State. And now came Robertson Smith with a startling theory which seemed to strike at the very foundations of Protestantism.

So long as the Bible was viewed as the infallible record of a supernatural revelation from God, the duty of the Scottish theologian was plain. His attitude to the Bible was that of the scientist to Nature—namely, to gather into a system and present in logical order the scattered truths which were disclosed to the humble inquirer. This was the method followed by Calvin in his day, and by Hodge in our day. To those who had been trained in the old school the views to which Robertson Smith gave utterance seemed to give the death-blow to Protestant theology as a science. To tell the theologian that the Bible was not trustworthy was like telling the scientist that the laws of Nature were not reliable. In both cases, in the absence of certainty, a science of divine things and of Nature is impossible. Is it to be wondered at that the views of Robertson Smith came upon the Free Church like an earthquake shock? Not since the Reformation had theological



Scotland been confronted with such grave issues.

What, then, was the precise nature of the Higher Criticism which Robertson Smith imported from Germany? In the hands of its extreme exponents, like Wellhausen and Kuenen, the Higher Criticism was an attempt to account for the Bible not by revelation, but by evolution. In their view the Bible is not an infallible record of supernatural occurrences: it is not even an authoritative record of the history of the Hebrews. The Bible, it was said, has grown up like other literature. The various portions do not necessarily belong to the time in which they are said to have been written. Further, like other primitive peoples, the Hebrews had no conception of history in the modern sense. In the most confusing way they mixed up legend, myth, and history. The story of the Creation need not be taken as scientifically correct; the Fall is classed as legendary; the personality of Abraham is doubtful; the details of the Exodus and the narrative of the wilderness journey must be taken with considerable pinches of salt. As to the Pentateuch, the Germans held that

Moses was not the author. It was really a compilation by ecclesiastics of the Exile period who traded upon the name and reputation of Moses in order to give historic prestige to their large schemes of reform. Robertson Smith did not go so far as Wellhausen and Kuenen. His view was that, though the Bible failed as history when tested by modern canons, it still was a revelation from God to man. Intensely religious by nature and evangelical by training, Robertson Smith thought he had found a middle way whereby he could do justice at one and the same time to the old evangelical and the new critical view. The main charges brought against him were that he denied that the Aaronic priesthood was instituted in the wilderness; that he alleged that the legislative parts of Deuteronomy were a prophetic recasting of the Mosaic law, not older than the seventh century B.C.; and that he denied the verbal infallibility of the Books of Chronicles.

Robertson Smith's friends—even those who did not share his views—pleaded earnestly on his behalf, but in vain. I need not dwell on the details of the prosecution. In the

Assembly of 1881 he was deprived of his professoriate on the ground that his views were a disturbing element in the Church. The late Principal Rainy incurred no little unpopularity in depriving the Church of the services of the professor, not because he had been found guilty of heresy, but because he was a disturber of the ecclesiastical peace. What else could Principal Rainy have done? The Church had dealt very leniently with Robertson Smith, who had only himself to blame if the case was re-opened. The re-opening of the case changed the whole situation. It was no longer a question of the professor's views, but of the peace of the Church, which is not a debating society. The leaders of the Church had to consider the effect of the new views on the people at large.

Upon the people the effects of the new views were far-reaching. They could not appreciate the subtle distinction made by Robertson Smith of a revelation through literature largely unhistorical. Plain men and women, whose spiritual lives were bound up with the old views, found themselves like sailors who were



suddenly shipwrecked and were left clinging to a raft. Their views of the Bible and the plan of salvation were thrown into confusion. In their simple fashion they felt that if the narrative of the Fall is treated as unhistorical the key-stone of Protestant theology is removed. Take away the first Adam and the Fall, and in the view of the laity the reasoning of Paul about the second Adam becomes meaningless. Moreover, if the supernatural details of the wilderness journey and the Divine injunctions about sacrifices in the Pentateuch are traceable to the imaginative editing of ecclesiastics of the Exile, what becomes of the parallel in the Epistle to the Hebrews between the Mosaic sacrifices and the sacrifice on Calvary? For large numbers of the clergy the situation was also serious. If the new views were correct they would have to dismiss to the moles and the bats the most of what they learned in the theological hall. There, for instance, was the learned and exhaustive work by a man once held in great esteem in the Free Church, Professor Fairbairn, on the *Typology of Scripture*. Clearly that work would need to be

relegated to the Museum of Theological Antiquities if the new views of the Bible were to rule the future.

The ejection of Robertson Smith from his chair could not, of course, stop the career of the Higher Criticism, which some years later found an able advocate in Professor George Adam Smith, who also came under the notice of the Assembly. He was found not guilty, but was told not to do it again. That the Church was not disposed to capitulate to the Higher Criticism was shown in its attitude towards some utterances of the late Principal Marcus Dods and the late Professor Bruce. Dr. Dods was thought to be unsound on the Atonement and on the inspiration of Scripture, and Bruce was taken to task for his free handling of the gospel records. In both cases, after satisfactory explanations, the heresy prosecutions were abandoned. It is a singular fact that the Established Church, which used to be very tolerant of theological laxity, has of late years taken up a conservative attitude. This was seen in what was known as the Kilmun heresy case, where the offending minister had to leave his charge for holding views which in earlier

days would scarcely have attracted attention.

At the same time the fact has to be faced that in both the Established and United Free Churches there is, especially among the younger clergy, great intellectual unrest, very largely owing to the Higher Criticism. The Bible does not hold the authoritative place it once did. The seriousness of this is strongly in evidence in connection with the movement for Creed revision. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the Confession of Faith. The modern mind has moved away from the theological standpoint of the men who framed the Confession. A new Confession, in harmony with the ideas of to-day, is felt to be an urgent necessity. Why not make a new one? Why the timid attempt to get out of the difficulty by vague formulas, such as "the substance of the faith," etc.? The answer is to be found in the serious fact that in consequence of the lessened authority of the Bible there is now no ultimate court of appeal on theological questions. The Westminster divines who drew up the Confession were on solid ground. They could appeal to the Bible as an infallible

depository of revealed truth. Take away, as the Higher Criticism has done, the element of infallibility, and nothing is left as a court of appeal but the voice of the Church. But that is a step backward to Romanism, which subordinates the Bible to the Church. With the head of the Church infallible, Romanists profess to find a place in their system for the principle of authority; but with Protestantism the case is entirely different. With it the voice of the Church can only mean the voice of the majority. Now, if theological disputes are to be settled by the majority, that means that the authoritative basis of the Church is democratic instead of theocratic, as in the old days when the Bible was accepted as the ultimate and infallible standard.

The fact has to be faced that Scottish theology at present is in a transition state, and will remain so till the leaders in the Churches courageously face the question which is troubling clergy and laity alike—namely, the question of the position of the Bible in the sphere of theology. In the Bible, apart from all theories, the religious nature of man will always find sustenance. The religious instinct

is independent of theories. It is as indestructible as human nature. To that fact philosophies the most opposite, like Spencerianism and Hegelianism, bear testimony; but religion will never exercise its proper influence so long as it remains at the vague stage of sentiment. Protestantism at the time of the Reformation would not have conquered had it not been able to confront its great rival with a comprehensive theory of life, embracing in its sweep the great realities—God, man, and society.

There is much talk in these days of ecclesiastical unity. That is good, and much to be desired. But of infinitely greater urgency and importance is theological certainty. A religion of sentiment may do for isolated individuals, but a Church with a mission must aim at something more than sentiment. Its unity must be rooted in knowledge. The unity of a Church without a definite creed, and resting on sentiment only, is a delusive unity—the unity of a landscape in a fog. Just now the fog in theological Scotland is somewhat dense, but there are signs that it is gradually lifting. There are signs that unity



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of religious sentiment is being supplemented by unity of belief. There are signs that in a roundabout way Scotland is coming back to the fundamental elements in the old creed. In the words with which I conclude my book, *A Century of Intellectual Development*—

“Is not science pressing to the front the fundamental idea of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God and the sacredness of law? In regard to God is not the science of to-day proclaiming in unmistakable tones the Hegelian doctrine of the Absolute as the inner life of all reality? And what is the modern passion for democracy, with its demand for equality, but a political form of the idea of brotherhood upon which the Broad Church placed so much stress? What, too, is the modern passion of philanthropy, showing itself in earnest efforts to rescue the fallen, to bind up the broken hearts, and to relieve human suffering, but an unconscious attempt to reproduce the spirit of Jesus Christ and to proclaim Him, in the style of Ritschlianism, the founder and inspirer of the Kingdom of God? In brief, amid all the diversity of religious and theological opinion, may we not detect practical unanimity on these points—the Sovereignty and Fatherhood of

God, the Headship and Leadership of Christ, the brotherhood of man, the dignity of service, salvation through sacrifice, and the kingdom of righteousness as the end of all aspiring endeavour—the goal of humanity ? ”





# THE RISE OF PHILOSOPHY



## CHAPTER IV

### THE RISE OF PHILOSOPHY

BETWEEN theology and philosophy in the earlier stages there is a natural affinity. Theology, in the orthodox sense, busies itself with the systematizing of the doctrines of revelation, while philosophy busies itself with their intellectual comprehension. The relation between the two is clearly shown in the saying of Anselm: "I believe in order that I may understand." As the fundamental demand made by the Church of the Middle Ages upon the human mind was belief, it is easy to see that philosophy was used not in the independent pursuit of truth, but in order to make reason harmonize with faith. For this purpose great use was made of Aristotle's philosophy so far as it was understood. Here was laid the foundation of the huge system known as Scholasticism, which kept the human

mind in bondage till the Reformation, or rather the Renaissance. In truth the Reformers were in no mood to study the philosophical side of the conflict with Rome; indeed in the reformed universities Aristotle was dominant till towards the close of the sixteenth century. Ultimately Aristotle was dethroned, but it was not till the Revolution that Scotland got breathing space for the consideration of the problems of philosophy in the modern sense of the term.

Philosophy, like theology, deals with the great subjects, God, the universe, and man; and by carefully noting the attitude of the various thinkers to these three questions we shall be able to trace the evolution of Scottish philosophy. When Francis Hutcheson, the father of Scottish Philosophy, began to busy himself with metaphysical inquiries a new method had come into vogue, the inductive with its respect for facts in place of the scholastic with its endless word-spinning and dialectical gymnastics. Locke set the fashion by refusing to soar into transcendental regions, and by insisting upon an examination of the powers of the human mind, so as to gauge

its capacity for dealing with the great problems of existence. The method of Locke was followed by Hutcheson, though not slavishly. In the sphere of Ontology he rejected the Cartesian demonstration of the existence of God, and, true to the inductive principle, based the defence of Deism on the argument from Design. He finds Locke's system helpful in his conflict with Calvinism, and the doctrine of natural depravity he opposes by the utilitarian theory of morals with its all-embracing optimism.

As it was the avowed object of the Moderates, in the phrase of Hutcheson, to put a new face on theology, they found the philosophy of Locke admirably suited for their purpose. Hutcheson had no desire to deny the supernatural, he ignored it. He set himself to construct a scheme of thought which, without doing violence to Scottish beliefs, would substitute a thinly veiled rationalism for the Calvinism of the Kirk. While rejecting the Cartesian demonstration of the existence of God, he found it necessary to use the Deity as a kind of philosophic figure-head. The idea of God which Descartes based on innate

ideas Hutcheson, following Locke, traced to an empirical origin; but in the deistical creed of the Scottish Moderates God reigned but did not govern. Experience, not revelation, was to be made the starting-point of the thought of the future. This is clearly seen in the ethical side of Hutcheson's philosophy. He seeks the sanctions of morality not in revelation, but in the constitution of human nature. By the aid of Locke, Hutcheson thought it possible to retain enough of the theological dogmas to constitute a kind of natural religion, while at the same time making experience and the study of human nature take the place of the fervid supernaturalism of the Confession of Faith.

But a change was to come over the philosophic optimism of the deistical school. David Hume appeared upon the scene, and delivered a series of deadly blows at the Lockian philosophy. Locke not only asserted that all knowledge was built out of experience; he set himself to describe the process. He found ideas to originate in sensation and reflection. External objects mirrored themselves in the mind, and by means of reflection were

converted into ideas. So much for the nature and origin of knowledge. What of its validity? If impressions coming through the senses have to be worked up into ideas by reflection before they gain the dignity of knowledge, we have to ask, What is the relation between the objective reality and the subjective ideas? Locke's reply is disconcerting. We must not, he says, think that our ideas are exactly the images and qualities of something inherent in the object. How, then, are we to discover the precise nature of the objective world which we think of as material? Locke recognizes that all the qualities of Matter do not exist as they seem, but are conditioned by the mind. Light and heat, for example, have no objective existence; they exist only in relation to mind. But if the mind clothes Matter with a number of qualities, why not with all? Berkeley saw the dilemma, and endeavoured to extricate Locke from the philosophic quagmire by abolishing Matter as a substance. Spirit, not Matter, said Berkeley, is the real substance of the Universe.

We are now in a position to appreciate fully the intervention of Hume. Berkeley's



contention was that there was no evidence of a permanent substance called Matter. To this Hume replied that there was just as little evidence of a permanent substance called Mind. What we are conscious of, says Hume, is not an entity called mind, but a chain of feelings linked together by association. The effect of all this on the theological side of the Lockian philosophy was unsettling in the highest degree. Locke, followed by Hutcheson, made Causation as expressed in the argument of Design a stepping-stone to belief in God. By substituting Association for Causation Hume knocked the foundation from Theology. By resolving mind into a series of feelings, he rendered chaotic the science of psychology. The three great departments of philosophy—ontology, cosmology and psychology, by Hume were driven into bankruptcy.

Hume proved to be an epoch-making force in the history of philosophy. He awakened Kant from his slumbers, and started German thought on its high philosophic career which found its culmination in the all-embracing system of Hegel. Meanwhile, what we have

to deal with is not the German, but the Scottish, answer to Hume. His most resolute opponent was Reid. Reid has never been estimated at his real value. Looked upon as the philosopher of common sense, the representative, so to speak, of the average man, Reid has been treated as a kind of intruder in the philosophic arena. No one would think of placing him alongside the German opponents of Hume, but it is a striking fact that between the answers of Reid and Kant there is a remarkable resemblance. Reid saw the great issues which were at stake. If Hume's views were to prevail, religion and all that pertained to the higher side of life would fall under eclipse. If these views were to be overturned Reid recognized that Hume's errors must be attacked at the root, namely, the Lockian theory of mind. Accordingly Reid joined issue with Locke. As I have dealt with this part of the subject in my volume *Books to Read and How to Read Them*, I may be permitted to reproduce the following sentences :—

“ Reid declared that the mind was not a blank organism, the passive recipient of the

impressions of the senses. According to Reid, the mind is originally endowed with a definite structure and equipment with which it proceeds to interpret experience. In his view every perception implies a judgment. We do not, as Locke has it, first collect our isolated impressions, and then classify and compare them; in the very act of perception we are exercising judgment. Now whence comes this capacity of judging? Clearly not from experience, as without judgment there could be no experience for us. Reid's great claim to the regard of philosophers is that he was the first who detected the only effective weapon with which to meet Hume. Strictly speaking, Kant simply founded his whole system on the fruitful suggestion of Reid—namely, that before experience itself is possible, before the impressions of sense can even make themselves known, there must exist a self-conscious mind whose structure is not created by experience, but which needs experience to set it to work."

It is a tribute to Reid's power that his influence extended beyond his native land; along with Hume he took from Scottish philosophy the reproach of parochialism. In their contest with the materialistic theories of

their time the French thinkers like Jouffroy and Cousin found in Reid a formidable ally. In the words of Cousin: "It would be impossible to write a history of Scotland in the last half of the eighteenth century without meeting everywhere in the numerous and remarkable productions of the Scotch genius of this epoch the noble spirit which that genius excited, and which in its turn has communicated to it a new force."

Scotland in the eighteenth century produced quite a crop of thinkers of a philosophic turn of mind, among whom may be mentioned Campbell, Oswald, Beattie, Lord Monboddo, Adam Smith, etc., but inasmuch as they struck no original vein of thought, opened no new avenues of metaphysical inquiry, they need not detain us long. Upon the shoulders of Dugald Stewart fell the mantle of Reid. Stewart was more a rhetorician than a philosopher; his work might be summed up in the remark that he gave literary form to the system of his master, and kindled in the breasts of a generation of students a noble enthusiasm for the higher things of the mind. Nor does Thomas Brown, Stewart's successor,

call for detailed mention. His name is associated with one department of psychology rather than with fundamental problems, a department which occupied also the attention of Hume—the relation of Cause and Effect, in which he departed considerably from the traditional treatment of the Scottish school.

But the day of small men was passing away. A giant appeared in the person of Sir William Hamilton. In his hands Scottish philosophy not only revived, but acquired a world-wide reputation. Hume's speculations had brought forth showers of pamphlets, but they never had been laid to rest. In philosophical circles an uneasy feeling prevailed that the last had not been heard of this troubler in Israel. Reid had spent his force upon Hume, but the task of demolition had been left unfinished. To the task Hamilton, in the spirit of Reid, addressed himself. Hume by his summary treatment of Mind and Matter had left nothing stable in the universal flow; personal identity itself seemed something quite elusive. Hamilton took his stand on Consciousness. Consciousness of personal identity and of an objective material world—upon



those two necessary beliefs, which are presupposed in all intellectual activity, hang all our knowledge. Again we come back to the question which troubled Reid. What is the nature of this objective existence which we call the world? Hamilton called himself a natural Realist after the manner of Reid, whose theory he stripped of its crudeness, though there are those who think that Reid would have difficulty at times in recognizing his own views in the revised version. If Hamilton's speculations did not satisfy the conditions of an absolutely sound theory, they had one great merit—they gave a great impetus to psychological thought, and by rousing into activity the powers of John Stuart Mill, and raising fundamental questions, Hamilton linked the Scottish school with the latest aspects of the evolution philosophy.

The problem with which Hamilton's name will always be conspicuously associated is that known as the Relativity of Knowledge. In his famous *Edinburgh Review* article, Hamilton at one bound sprang into the first rank of thinkers. The remarkable thing is

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that Hamilton, a professed follower of Reid, whose whole life was spent in combating the philosophic Nihilism of Hume, should practically undo the work of his master. Hamilton did not mean his theory to be pressed into the service of Agnosticism. While admitting the incapacity of thought to deal with the Absolute, he hoped to serve the cause of Theism by falling back upon faith. This part of his philosophy he never welded into organic unity, with the result that the portions which he owes to Reid, and those which he derived from Kant, are left unreconciled. In the words of Professor Laurie in his excellent book on *Scottish Philosophy*: "If all our knowledge be of the relative and conditioned, and if every attempt to transgress these limits lead us to the realms of non-conceivability or contradiction, then philosophy is not in a position to affirm or to deny anything which may be supposed to stretch beyond. . . . From this point of view Hamilton's philosophy has strengthened the phenomenalism which, issuing from the scepticism of Hume, has assumed a positive form in such writers as



Bain and Mill, and has been further encouraged by the progress of modern science in its exclusive search for facts and uniformities. . . . The philosophy of Common Sense, devised by Reid as a safeguard against Scepticism and Idealism, was so transmuted by Hamilton as to lead back again to the conclusion that nothing can be affirmed or denied beyond the fleeting phenomena of consciousness."

In various quarters Hamilton's views met with vigorous opposition. John Stuart Mill subjected them to severe analysis, with special reference to the theological Agnosticism of Mansel, who sought to establish the repellent view that Divine revelations which conflict with our ideas of morality must be accepted, because human standards cannot be applied to the Divine. Thus religiously and intellectually the conscience and mind of man were absolutely cut off from all contact with the Great Reality. Hamilton also found in James Frederick Ferrier—an original thinker whose cast of thought was more German than Scottish—a keen antagonist. Ferrier, who was resolutely opposed to the Scottish philosophy,

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as interpreted by Reid and Hamilton, evolved a system of his own, which may be said to have died with him. He was a voice crying in the wilderness—a wilderness, however, which since his time has been considerably peopled by exponents of ideas akin to his own, bearing the stamp of German Idealism.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN  
PHILOSOPHY



## CHAPTER V

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PHILOSOPHY

SINCE Ferrier's day the German influence has come in like a flood, and to this influence may largely be attributed the unsatisfactory state in which the Hamiltonian philosophy was left. Hamilton thought he could more effectually combat the views of Hume by calling Kant to the aid of Reid. The German, like the Scottish, philosopher opposed the views of Locke which Hume had drawn to their logical conclusion with such lamentable consequences. Instead, however, of falling back, as Reid did, upon common sense, Kant revived the innate theory in a new form. Instead of innate ideas, he postulated for the mind an innate structure by means of which it is compelled to think under certain necessary and universal forms. Reality, in that case, was not an affair of sense impressions

but of thought forms; but it needs little reflection to see that Kant brings us no nearer Reality than Hume. According to Hume all we know is sense impressions; according to Kant, before we can have knowledge sense impressions must be taken up and poured into the mould of the categories. But at the end of the process we are still without guarantee that the knowledge so acquired is in touch with Reality. In a word, Kant, like Hume, ends in phenomenalism. Hamilton clearly did not recognize the logical germs of Agnosticism which lay hidden in Kant's theory of knowledge. When he wrote his famous *Edinburgh Review* article he was mainly intent upon checking the career of Cousin, who, beginning as a disciple of Reid, was coquetting with Schelling and his theory of the Absolute.

Hamilton, as already mentioned, hoped to bring back religious feeling by means of faith, but in a scientific age when reason was proceeding from victory to victory, it was a foregone conclusion that a theory which chained the human mind to phenomena and refused to soar into transcendental regions would be eagerly accepted. Accordingly leaders of scientific

thought in this country, and in Germany, under the shadow of the names of Kant and Hamilton, prided themselves on the adoption of Naturalism with its contempt for all metaphysical speculations. Upon Hamilton's doctrine of the Relativity of Knowledge, Herbert Spencer erected his system of philosophy, and Huxley relates that his Agnosticism owed its origin to Hamilton's essay on the Philosophy of the Unconditioned.

If Scottish philosophy was to remain true to its traditions, if its conclusions were to harmonize with the fundamental tenets of theology—namely, belief in man as an intellectual and moral being capable of reaching the truth in regard to his relations to God and the world, the Kantian element which Hamilton had introduced must be got rid of. Among the first direct attacks upon Hamilton was *The Philosophy of the Infinite* by a former student of Hamilton, Henry Calderwood, who afterwards became Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University, a book which even at this time of day will repay perusal by those who are perplexed by the prevailing Agnosticism. The late Dr. McCosh also



proved a vigorous assailant of the theory of Hamilton, who has nowhere been more severely handled than in his own country. Professor Pringle Pattison, who now occupies Hamilton's chair, deals very fully with the inherent weaknesses of the doctrine of Relativity in his invaluable *Scottish Philosophy*, and comes to the conclusion that any attempt to ingraft the Agnostic relativity of Kant's Critique upon the Natural Realism of the Scottish philosophy is contrary to the genius of the latter. Professor James Seth, who succeeded Calderwood in the chair of Moral Philosophy, also deals with the subject in his *Ethical Principles*. Dealing with the Unknown and the Unknowable of Hamilton and Spencer from the ethical point of view, Professor Seth says: "Agnosticism if it is true must carry with it the ultimate disappearance of religion and with religion of all morality higher than utility. . . . The practical life is connected in a rational being with the theoretical; we cannot be permanently illogical either in morality or religion. The postulate of man's spiritual life is the harmony of nature and spirit, or the spiritual constitution of the universe." The late Professor

Flint proved himself a discerning and penetrating critic of Hamilton, and in his work on Agnosticism he shows with his accustomed lucidity and depth the religious significance of the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge.

The importance of Kant in the history of philosophy is greatly owing to the fact that out of his system developed two opposite theories, one which might be labelled Agnostic, and the other Absolute. In Germany an attempt was made to get rid of the phenomenalism of Kant's system by laying stress on the innate element, the thought forms which by Fichte and Schelling were made the basis of a system of Idealism which owes its comprehensive originality to the architectonic intellect of Hegel. Hegel's aim was to get rid of the dualism which resulted from the doctrine of relativity. Accepting Kant's dictum that knowledge is constituted by thought, Hegel concluded that if the world is intelligible only to a self, analysis of the self should yield the law of the world process, the universal thought process. With Kant, as we saw, knowledge is relative, because in the act of thought we are establishing relations, and as Hamilton understood it, the Absolute exists

entirely out of relation, it cannot be known. To this a Hegelian would reply that the Absolute is not the unrelated, but the sum of all relations, and that in the act of thought we are in presence not of mere phenomena, but of the all-embracing Reality. Introduced into Scotland by the late Dr. Hutchison-Stirling, a thinker of great intellectual virility, whose writings influenced a generation of Scottish students, Hegelianism soon became popular, and for a time eclipsed the Scottish School. Through the writings of the two Cairds and the enthusiastic advocacy of a band of young men, German modes of thinking gained the ascendancy. In this connection special mention should be made of Mr. R. B. (now Lord) Haldane's profound work *The Pathway to Reality*.

Of late there are signs of a reaction. The claims of Hegelianism have been pitched too high, and among Scottish philosophers there are those, like Mr. A. J. Balfour, who have dealt it damaging blows. In the region of philosophy Mr. Balfour has proved himself a master. Among the most abstruse problems he moves with the ease born of capacity. His early work, *In Defence of Philosophic Doubt*,

showed him in quite a Humian vein, directing his critical shafts, not at the metaphysicians, but at the scientists and the assumptions upon which they were erecting their creed of Naturalism. In his latest book, *The Foundations of Belief*, Mr. Balfour directs his pointed arrows against German Idealism as expounded by its Scottish and English advocates. It is difficult to find the clue to Mr. Balfour's own system, as he is much more occupied in criticism of other thinkers than in scientifically formulating his own views. His object seems to be not so much to come forth as a constructive thinker as to protest against the arrogance of scientists on the one hand and the conceit of Hegelians on the other, and to inculcate the duty of humility in presence of the vast problem of Existence which reason by itself is competent to discover, but which by itself is incompetent to solve.

In the writings of the venerable Professor Fraser the reverential caution of the Scottish school is well displayed. He steers clear between Agnosticism on the one hand, with its creeping helplessness, and Hegelianism with its soaring audacity on the other. He does not, like the Agnostics, belittle reason in presence of

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the higher problems, nor yet does he imagine that man with his intellectual measuring line can plumb the Infinite. Scottish philosophers have always laid stress upon faith as well as reason in their study of the scheme of things. With Kant they agree in laying emphasis upon the moral side of the problem, and recognize that by conscience as well as by reason a way of approach is open to the Infinite. They deny that reason can do nothing, and that it can do everything. They strike a middle path; they trust to the universal and necessary principles of reason, as far as they go, and when the path ends they are prepared to believe that in the result, as in the process, the true and the good will prevail, in a word that the universe will be found to be rational through and through. This is the conclusion to which Professor Fraser comes in his Gifford lectures on Theism. These lectures, together with his works on Locke and Berkeley, breathe the spirit of the Scottish philosophy in its best form, as combining the deepest search into the great problems of life and destiny with the reverential awe, humility, and trust that spring from religious feeling.



In the writings of Professor Pringle Pattison we find the best elements of the German school blended with the characteristics of the Scottish school. He has been able to combat Agnosticism, which has developed into Materialism, without running, as Hegelianism is so apt to do, into Pantheism. Professor Pringle Pattison's Idealism is not of this type. In his view the highest philosophy does not obliterate the distinction between the divine and the human, and does not destroy man's hope of immortality. The system of Idealism which he has reached enables him to meet Materialism at all points, without, as in the case of Hegelianism, committing philosophic suicide just when victory is within reach. How, then, does the Professor combat Materialism? He refuses to accept as valid its interpretation of the Universe in terms of mechanics. The mechanical view, as he puts it, "through looking ever backward finds an explanation of things in reducing them to their lowest terms, and presents us, for example, with Matter and Motion as philosophical ultimates." View the Universe from the mechanical standpoint, and when we pass the inorganic sphere we are baffled at every

step: Materialism fails hopelessly to account for life and consciousness, and in despair is driven to give the whole thing up as an insoluble puzzle. In the practical sphere this means either Pessimism or Stoicism, according to individual temperament, or, where the religious instinct is too strong to be suppressed, the cult of Mysticism or the religion of Humanity. Now, according to Professor Pringle Pattison, we get rid of these intellectual nightmares by interpreting life teleologically. In other words, we can only understand the Universe and man, we can only discern their meaning and value when we study them, not in their lowest, but in their highest manifestations.

Inasmuch as the latest product of the Universe is self-conscious spirit we are justified in postulating Spirit, not Matter, at the outset of the great evolutionary process. The last word of science, like that of philosophy, as interpreted by Professor Pringle Pattison, is neither Agnosticism nor Pantheism, but Theism; and thus room is found for the sentiment of religion which with him means self-surrender of the human will to the divine. Without religion man is a unit struggling with an evil



nature and adverse circumstances ; with religion man feels that God is with him. Religion, in the view of Professor Pringle Pattison, like philosophy, seeks after the Supreme harmony.

What of human destiny ? Our philosopher will have nothing to do with systems which mock humanity's highest aspirations, or meet them with an Agnostic note of interrogation. He can find no consolation in the progress of humanity if the individual withers and drops into nothingness like the dead leaves of autumn. In his *Man's Place on the Cosmos* he pins his faith to " the old idea of the world as the training-ground of individual character," and rests firmly in the belief " that whatever of wisdom and goodness there is in us was not born out of nothing, but has its fount somewhere and somehow in a more perfect goodness and truth." Professor Pringle Pattison, it will be seen, links philosophy to religion.

In these days of cosmopolitanism it will not be possible for any country to claim for itself a distinctively national school of philosophy. Thought is becoming universalized : into one mighty stream are flowing innumerable rills. One thing is certain. If the philosophy of the

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future is to be victorious in its combat with a materialistic civilization, with all its soul-deadening and intellect-blighting influences, it can only be by keeping steadily before the eyes of mankind the three great problems which throughout its history has ever occupied the attention of the Scottish School of Philosophy—God, the world, and man.

## THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT

READERS of Buckle will remember the startling contrasts he draws between the Scotland of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Buckle, in the seventeenth century the Scottish clergy kept the people in a state of intellectual bondage; in the eighteenth century, thanks to men such as Hutcheson, Hume, and Adam Smith, the chains which kept the people in bondage were broken, and the country entered upon a glorious career of intellectual freedom and discovery. It is remarkable that Buckle, who professed a high regard for science, should have approached the history of Scotland in a woefully unscientific spirit. The *History of Civilization* had great vogue in its day, and even yet it may be read with profit by those who like to have facts presented in the form

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of luminous generalizations. Tried by modern standards, Buckle's book, however, is found wanting, and that simply because the author, in approaching the study of history, entirely ignored the great principle of relativity, which plays such an important part in the interpretation of the past. National institutions are no longer judged by absolute standards; they are studied in relation to their historical environments and estimated accordingly. Institutions which, tried by modern standards, are condemned as obstructions to progress may find their explanation and justification in the fact that they were the natural and necessary products of the time in which they flourished.

Attention to the idea of relativity, which we owe to the evolution conception of history, would save modern disciples of Buckle from a partisan attitude towards Scottish history. Certain writers, for instance, are never weary of representing the Reformation as the substitution of one kind of despotism for another—the despotism of Presbyterianism for the despotism of Romanism. Thus it has come about that writers who have no sympathy with the great religious movements of Scotland contrast

the turbulence and wranglings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the comparative calm of the eighteenth century, and in a tone of contempt discuss the centuries of religious struggle as a kind of prolonged Donnybrook.

A deep study of Scottish history shows that there is no such gulf as Buckle represents between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The antagonism lies on the surface. When viewed calmly and rationally, it will be found that the seventeenth was the natural preparation for the eighteenth century—that, in other words, the struggle for religious liberty under the Reformers and the Covenanters was the necessary preparation for the scientific movement. What the Reformers and the Covenanters did was to secure liberty, without which the cultivation of science was impossible. We see an illustration of this in the case of Napier of Merchiston. He founded no school. Why? As I have remarked elsewhere—

“The explanation is not far to seek. After James VI ascended the throne of England in 1603, the trouble between the king and his Presbyterian subjects, which had long been



brewing, grew steadily worse. With England at his back, James resumed with renewed energy his efforts to anglicize the Church of Scotland—efforts which were continued by his son and grandson. In the end the kings were defeated, and Scotland retained her national religion; but they were not defeated without a terrible struggle and a terrible sacrifice. The best minds of the nation were absorbed in the struggle, and there was no time for scientific research. The Covenanters, it is true, did not view scientific research with a friendly eye, but it is unjust to blame them for the neglect of science in Scotland. The times were unsettled; and when men were being shot down at their own doors, and sent as prisoners to the Bass Rock and Dunnottar, it was not to be expected that science could gain a footing.”

When the Reformers and the Covenanters won the battle for religious liberty, when they secured for Scotland spiritual independence, they paved the way for the enjoyment of intellectual independence, without which scientific research is impossible. Unknown to one another, the men of religion, the men of letters, and the men of science were fighting

as soldiers in the same great cause of emancipation. In the evolution of Scottish life and thought the seventeenth century was a factor on the side of progress, and not, as Buckle thought, an obstructive force. The blood of the martyr proved to be the seed of the State as well as of the Church.

That it was the disturbed state of the country and not intellectual inaptitude that was the cause of Scotland's intellectual backwardness was conclusively shown by the quickness with which the national mind fell into line with the great scientific movement associated with Isaac Newton. The improvement was retarded at the outset by the confused notions held by leading thinkers with regard to scientific method. The tendency, which may be traced in Descartes, was to mix two things essentially different, namely, scientific descriptions of the Universe with philosophical explanations. Whereas Descartes, for example, not content with the discovery of facts and their classification was always introducing metaphysical elements, Newton carefully distinguished between the mechanical forces with which he had to deal, and their spiritual interpretation.

From a metaphysical conception of Matter Descartes formulated certain views which, as they could not be verified, were of no real scientific value. Newton, on the other hand, laid supreme stress upon verification. Take his handling of Gravitation. Attraction and repulsion were favourite metaphysical phrases, but they had no practical value till Newton formulated in exact language his famous discovery. As George Henry Lewes says, a theory may be transferred from science to metaphysics by withdrawing the verifiable element. Withdraw the formula inversely as the square of the distance, and directly as the mass, and attraction is left a mere occult quality. It was precisely because Newton stood faithfully upon verification and demonstrable fact that even in France he was recognized in preference to Descartes as the founder of modern science.

The positive and logical cast of the Scottish mind at once detected the significance of Newton's system: in fact, Scotland was far ahead of England in recognizing the great scientific value of Newton's work; as evidence of this is the fact that his system was taught in

Edinburgh University thirty-five years before it was recognized in Newton's own university of Cambridge. Buckle credits the Scottish mind with a strong aptitude towards the deductive method in the search for truth, and he seems to have justification for this view in the remarkable success of the early scientists in the sphere of mathematics—a fact which goes far to explain the popularity of the Newtonian system in the Scottish universities. Further evidence of the aptitude of the Scottish mind for scientific study is had in the fact that in the distracted sixteenth century, in the midst of social and ecclesiastical turmoil, there sprang up a man who has left his mark upon the science of mathematics—namely, Napier of Merchiston, the inventor of logarithms. As has been well said, “whether we consider the great originality of the idea, the difficulty of carrying it into effect in the state in which algebraical analysis then was, or the immense practical and theoretical value of the invention, we shall have little difficulty in claiming for Napier the honour of a discovery unsurpassed in brilliancy in the whole history of mathematics.”

Colin Maclaurin, who succeeded David Gregory, the introducer of Newton's system into Scotland, was a mathematical genius of the first order, and gave enthusiastic reception to the doctrines of Newton. His *Memoir on the Tides*, written from the standpoint of the gravitation theory, gained equal honour with Euler and Daniel Bernoulli, a famous Italian mathematician, the prize of the French Academy being equally divided among them. Referring to the part which Maclaurin played in planting the germs of scientific thought in Scotland, Professor Playfair, writing in the second volume of the *Edinburgh Review*, says, "the teaching of science by Maclaurin in Edinburgh University surpassed probably at that time the teaching of any other English or Continental university."

The close connection between spiritual and intellectual liberty is seen in the stamp of progressiveness which the Scottish universities got at the Reformation. From the writings of Buckle one would infer that the whole weight of the Reformed Church was thrown on the side of obscurantism; whereas, as a matter of fact, the universities bore the impress



of the great educational movement associated with the revolt against Rome. On this point Dr. Merz, in his valuable work on European thought in the nineteenth century, referring to the Scottish universities, notes the close connection between the educational movement and the Reformation, and in the course of a contrast between them and the English universities, says—

“The universities of Scotland, unlike those of England, instead of nursing an exclusive spirit and encouraging only scanty intercourse between teachers and students of different centres, lived in constant exchange of professors and ideas, much in the same way as has always been the custom, on a larger scale, among German and other Continental universities. Though this is destructive of that individual character of the university or the college which is so highly prized by many English fellows, it is certainly more conducive to the progress of studies and research, and it is the cause why, in the early history of recent science, the universities of Scotland have played so much more important a part than those of England.”

After the Union, when the political and ecclesiastical storms had spent their force, Scotland set herself diligently to cultivate the things that make for a pacific and progressive civilization. The heroes of the Reformation and Covenanting times had accomplished the great task of establishing the liberties of Scotland on a firm basis, and it now remained for the thinkers of the eighteenth century to build upon the foundation that had been laid in blood. It must be admitted that in their attitude to the new spirit and the new conditions the clergy were not equal to the occasion. They strove to keep the universities as nurseries to the Church. When, in 1639, the Covenanters gained the ascendency, they passed a resolution that all masters and teachers of colleges and schools should subscribe to the Covenant. Special care was taken that all the universities, and more especially the chairs of Divinity, should be filled by those favourable to the Reformed doctrines. Indeed, after the Revolution, subscription to the Confession of Faith was made a condition of holding office in the universities. Such short-sighted regulations did much to increase the unpopularity of



the Church among thinking men, and considerably retarded the progress of the scientific movement. Still, with all their drawbacks, the Scottish universities were more favourable to the cultivation of science than those of England. As Dr. Merz says—

“ Whilst in England modern science was cultivated outside the pale of the universities by Priestly, Davy, Wollaston, Young, Dalton, Faraday, and Joule—to whom we may even add Green and Boole—all eminent Scotch men of science, such as Gregory, Simson, Maclaurin, Playfair, Black, Thomson, Leslie, Brewster, and Forbes, were university professors, many of whom did not confine their labours to one centre, but spread the light of their ideas and researches all over the country. Whilst England has been great in single names, Scotland has certainly in proportion done more to diffuse modern scientific knowledge.”

Newton's epoch-making discovery naturally directed attention to Astronomy. Now that the law of planetary movements had been found the minds of leading thinkers became agitated over the problem of the origin of the Solar system. Was it possible not only to

explain by gravitation the sublime harmony of the Solar system, but also its origin and development? The answer came in the shape of the Nebular theory. To Kant is assigned the credit of the theory, but it is not generally known that before Kant, James Ferguson, the Scottish astronomer, anticipated the German philosopher. Ferguson held that the matter now forming the sun and planets originally existed in a detached condition through space, and by the force of gravitation were drawn together to form the celestial bodies. Contemporary with Ferguson was Alexander Wilson, the first director of the Glasgow Observatory, of whose services to science too little has been written. He was the virtual founder of the scientific study of the sun, and the first to make an exhaustive study of sun spots. He was the first of the Glasgow school of astronomers to treat meteorology on scientific principles.

The honourable place which Scotland held in the eighteenth she continued to hold in the nineteenth century. In the science of astronomy Scotland was well to the front. Thomas Henderson, born in 1798, was one

of the most famous astronomers of his age. He was the first to measure the distance of the stars, and thus solved a problem which had baffled the greatest men of science from Galileo to Herschel. Contemporary with Henderson at Edinburgh was John Pringle Nichol, Glasgow University. As an observer Nichol ranked far below Henderson, but as a constructive thinker he ranked above him. His work in defending the Nebular hypothesis when most of the great men of science had abandoned it can never be forgotten. On his death in 1859 he was succeeded by Robert Grant, whose *History of Physical Astronomy* is a standard work to this day. Mention should also be made of Sir David Gill, of Aberdeen, whose work as a practical astronomer has gained for him an enduring reputation.

The Nebular theory started the scientific mind on a new track. The idea of seeking the origin of the Solar system in a highly diffused gaseous matter raised questions with regard to the nature of matter. Whether or not it be as the result of centuries of intellectual dialectics it is a curious fact that the Scottish mind has always shown a marked fondness for

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the abstruse departments of knowledge. At any rate Scottish scientists have taken a special interest in matter, its nature and constitution. In this department they have done excellent pioneering work; indeed it may be claimed for an eighteenth-century scientist, Joseph Black, the credit, by his investigations into the nature of heat, of putting scientists on the track of the modern doctrine of the indestructibility and transformation of force. Modern science is now familiar with the conception that the forces of Nature—such as heat, light, electricity, etc.—which used to be treated as independent entities are simply temporary manifestations of one form of energy which in its totality is incapable of increase or decrease. At the time of Black, heat was supposed to be a separate distinct material agent, though Bacon in his quaint prophetic way ventured to speak of it as a mode of motion. By his discovery of what is known as latent heat Black struck a blow at the material theory, though it must be admitted he did not see the full issues of his own discovery. He clung to the old view that heat was a material substance; but his discovery

paved the way for further discoveries by his successors which led to the important conclusion that heat and light are identical, and are capable of translation into each other.

If heat is shown to be simply a mode of motion, and no material entity, might not the same thing be said of other forms of force? Experiment verified the supposition, and thus, from Black's investigations into the nature of heat, the scientific mind proceeded till it was able to formulate the law of the mechanical equivalent of heat which has since become the corner-stone of the far-reaching law of the conservation of energy. As showing the close connection between speculative and practical science, it is interesting to note that in course of his labours in connection with the steam-engine, James Watt was greatly aided by the latent heat theory of Black.

Following Black came Sir John Leslie, who, in addition to his contributions to the study of heat and light, anticipated what is now known as the evolutionary view of Nature. At a time when Nature was treated on the department system, when each part was sup-



posed to have been specially created, we find Leslie writing as follows : “ We should recollect that in all her productions Nature exhibits a chain of perpetual gradations, and that the systematic divisions and limitations are entirely artificial, and designed merely to assist the memory and facilitate our conceptions.” The idea which Darwin and Spencer have popularized in our day is to be found in the writings of Leslie—the idea of the continuity of Nature. Nay, further, we find Leslie venturing into a region which even in our advanced days is dark and mysterious. There are those who would extend the idea of life not merely to organic, but to inorganic matter. The distinction between living and dead matter, it is said, is not true to the nature of things. Says Leslie : “ All forces are radically of the same kind, and the distinction of them into living and dead is not grounded on just principles.” In a strain remarkably anticipatory of modern scientific speculation, we find Leslie saying that even dead or inorganic substances must in their recondite arrangements exert such varying energies as, if fully unveiled to our eyes,

could not fail to strike us with wonder and surprise.

On the death of Leslie he was succeeded in the Chair of Natural Philosophy, in 1833, by James David Forbes, who permanently linked his name to science by his important demonstration of the polarization of heat. In addition he made valuable researches on the conduction of heat by iron bars, and underground temperature. His name will be most intimately associated with his important investigations into the nature of glaciers and glacial motion. In the department of Physics another Scottish scientist holds high place, Sir David Brewster, by his discoveries in light and especially with regard to its polarization. In the words of the late Professor Tait, to Brewster are due all the most important results arrived at in the field of optics during the nineteenth century. Brewster's position in science has been thus described by Forbes, his friend and fellow-labourer in the same field: "Few persons have made with their own eyes so vast a number of important observations; few have ever observed better or recorded their



observations more faithfully. His scientific glory is different from that of Young and Fresnel, but the discoverer of the law of polarization, of biaxal crystals, of optical mineralogy and of double refraction by compression will always occupy a foremost rank in the intellectual history of the age." The line of research started by Black and Leslie, and continued by Forbes and Brewster, was pursued by James Clerk-Maxwell, the late Lord Kelvin, and the late Professor Tait.

In the sphere of what may be called transcendental physics—that dealing with the nature and constitution of matter—the Scottish school of scientists are in the foremost rank. This is admitted by the author of *European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* as follows: "The important task of rebuilding the edifice of the physical sciences, and establishing it on a large scale, fell almost exclusively into the hands of what we may call the Scottish school of natural philosophy—James and William Thomson, Macquorn Rankine, James Clerk-Maxwell, and Balfour Stewart in this country, whilst Clausius worked abroad almost alone." In the same

connection is the following testimony by the same author :—

“ The real compendium of the new doctrine is the treatise on natural philosophy by Thomson (Lord Kelvin) and Tait, which has probably done more than any other book in this country to lead the mathematical students at the foremost universities and colleges into paths more useful for physical and experimental research. The greatest exponent of the new ideas was James Clerk-Maxwell, to whom is also due the merit of having applied them for the purpose of testing and confirming the worth of the treasure which lay hidden in the experimental researches of Faraday. Next to the handbook of Thomson and Tait no writings probably have done more—especially outside of England, on the Continent and in America—than those of Maxwell to revolutionize the teaching of natural philosophy.”

What, then, was the revolution in the scientific conception of the nature and constitution of matter caused by the Scottish school ?

The germ of the revolution was the kinetic theory of gases so brilliantly associated with

the name of Clerk-Maxwell. Up till then men of science accepted the Newtonian conception of matter as being made of solid hard particles—so very hard, in the words of Newton, “as never to wear or break in pieces; no ordinary power was able to divide what God Himself made one in the first creation.” Here in substance was the atomic theory of matter. This, which is known as the mechanical theory, got a severe blow when Joule showed that heat, for instance, was not a property of matter but a mode of motion. If heat is not a form of matter, but a mode of motion, might not the same thing be said of other so-called properties of matter—light, electricity, magnetism? What if it should be found that all the so-called properties of matter are simply modes of motion?

From this it was just a step to the doctrine of the conservation and the convertibility of force, or, as it is now called, energy—a doctrine which was placed on a scientific basis when Joule discovered the dynamical equivalent of heat. The investigations of Clerk-Maxwell, Helmholtz, and Hertz had the effect of sub-

stituting the dynamical for the mechanical theory of matter, and though Lord Kelvin was slow in accepting the new views, when he did accept them he worked incessantly at the idea of "a great chart in which all physical science will be represented with every property of matter shown in dynamic relation to the whole." The atom, which formerly was viewed as a hard, indestructible substance, now began to be conceived as a centre of energy, more particularly when, by his investigations into the electro-magnetic theory of light, Clerk-Maxwell was led to the conclusion that we were not dealing with properties of matter, but with undulations or vibrations of energy in a uniform medium. What is this medium? It is called the ether; and it was at this point that Kelvin made the boldest and most far-reaching attempt that has ever been made to solve the problem of the nature and constitution of matter. By his famous vortex ring theory he sought to show how matter itself might be evolved from the ether. Kelvin himself was not satisfied with the theory, but a competent authority like Professor J. J.

Thomson—who in this department of physics is doing splendid work—regards “the vortex atom explanation as the goal at which to aim.”

To recent speculation about radium and electrons Lord Kelvin was not quite sympathetic. His mind, naturally conservative, was slow to move except under the compulsion of demonstrative fact. What he aimed at was to reduce all physical phenomena within the duality of matter and energy. To this he added ether and electricity, but the recent extraordinary discoveries in regard to matter make it plain that the time is not yet for a great comprehensive theory which will unify the marvellous play of forces which we call the material universe.

The researches of Clerk-Maxwell have been in the highest degree fruitful. His electromagnetic theory of light has been pronounced as one of the most unifying ideas in modern science. In the department of electricity Maxwell's influence has been thus defined by Professor Arthur Thomson—one of Scotland's rising scientists. “The scientific study of



electricity initiated by Oersted and Ampere was profoundly influenced by the experimental genius and scientific temper of Faraday, found mathematical or precise formulation in the work of Lord Kelvin, and was developed into a provisional dynamical theory by the extraordinary insight of Clerk-Maxwell. It is perhaps not too much to say that what Newton did for gravitational phenomena was done by Clerk-Maxwell for electrical phenomena."

Thus it has come to pass that largely to the investigations of the Scottish school into the nature of electricity the conception of the atom which used to be viewed as the imperishable foundation-stone of the Universe has been completely revolutionized. Later researches, indeed, go to show that the atom is not an ultimate, but composed of corpuscles of which it is calculated that five hundred go to make an atom of hydrogen. It seems as if at the end of our scientific explanations we were brought face to face with the view that in its last analysis, viewed dynamically, Matter with its mysterious potencies is the manifestation of what Spencer calls the Infi-

nite and Eternal Energy, personified by  
Goethe—

“ In Beings floods, in Actions storms  
I walk and work above, beneath,  
Work and Weave in endless motion,  
Birth and Death,  
An Infinite Ocean,  
A seizing and giving,  
The fire of living,

’Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,  
And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by.”



THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT  
*(continued)*



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT (CONTINUED)

So far as the practical man is concerned, he is not, as a rule, particularly interested in abstruse speculations about the nature and constitution of matter, nor even in the details of planetary evolution. He is more interested in the nature and constitution of the earth, his dwelling-place, and as a consequence Geology is more popular than Physics. In this department of science Scotland has done brilliant work. The study of the earth entered the scientific stage when James Hutton published his epoch-making book. His book *The Theory of the Earth* has been described by Huxley as one of "the most remarkable contributions to geology which is recorded in the annals of the science." It was remarkable in this, that it applied, for the first time, scientific method to a subject which had been relegated

to the realm of speculation. When Hutton began to study the earth geologically, the crudest notions prevailed. The great changes everywhere apparent were associated with the Deluge. Other theories were afloat, but being merely speculative they possessed no scientific value. The question which Hutton faced was this—by what agencies had the earth been sculptured into its present form? According to one theory—the catastrophic—the principal agencies at work were convulsions, cataclysms, fire and flood. Hutton opposed this with the theory of uniformity, which meant that we must seek geological interpretation in causes which we observe operating in the present, and exhaust them before we import causes which no longer exist. As the result of prolonged study, Hutton came to the conclusion that the earth, instead of being a rigid mass, is everywhere undergoing changes. Slowly but surely the hardest rocks are being disintegrated by atmospheric, mechanical and chemical agencies. In addition, the oceans are perpetually eating in upon the land. Let this process continue long enough, and, argued Hutton, entire continents will be worn away.

What then ? With the wearing away of the continents the oceans are filled up. The solidifying of the debris at the bottom of the oceans gives rise to new rocks, which become the basis of new continents. To Hutton it seemed clear "that the basis of the present continents was laid in ancient sea-beds formed of the detritus of continents yet more ancient."

An important question arises—by what agency were these rocks lifted above the oceans so as to form new continents ? Hutton's reply was subterranean heat, which in the form of volcanic action upheaved ocean beds to form continents. This theory, to which Hutton, after many years' silent study, gave publicity in 1785 in a paper to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, met with violent opposition. A rival school, headed by Werner, a German, repudiated the volcanic part of the theory, and relied upon what is known as the aqueous theory. Over these two theories a violent controversy long raged. The Huttonians were known as Plutonists, while the followers of Werner were described as Neptunists.

It is a remarkable tribute to the thorough-

ness of Hutton's investigations that later students in the same field have found little to add to this enumeration of agencies in earth changes. In his *Theory of the Earth*, published in 1788, Hutton notes the following agencies—degradation of land by atmospheric and aqueous agencies, deposition of the debris as sediment in the ocean, consolidation and metamorphosis of sedimentary deposits by the internal heat and by injection of molten rock, disturbance and upheaval of oceanic deposits and formation of rocks by the consolidation of molten material, both at the surface and in the interior of the earth. Comparing this, remarks Professor Arthur Thomson, with Professor Geikie's book, *Earth Sculpture*, it is seen that only a few "additional modes of operation have been discovered in the course of the century. The progress has been in measuring the efficiency of the factors which Hutton recognized, rather than in discovering new ones."

To Hutton belongs the credit of placing geology on something like a scientific basis. His theory of the earth's formation, sound at heart, contained, however, serious imper-



fections, with which it was the work of another Scotsman, Sir Charles Lyell, effectively to deal. Hutton was right in attributing great geological changes to volcanic action, but his conception of the work of that agency was erroneous. He supposed that after long intervals of quietness volcanic action suddenly shot up great continents. What Lyell did was logically to apply Hutton's own theory of gradual changes to the entire geological phenomena. He denied the existence of great violent upheavals, and contended that the phenomena of the past were explainable on the theory of gradual changes. Lyell pinned his faith not merely to the uniformity of nature, but also to the marvellous effects of gradual changes extending over long periods of time. Phenomena which the Hutton school thought could only be produced by volcanic eruptions were traced by Lyell to the slow action of warmth, frost and rain. Lyell, however, had not exhausted all the causes of the earth's changes. It began to be seen that among the causes was ice, and after much controversy the existence of a great Ice Age was admitted, the influence of which had to be added to the

agents mentioned by Lyell as a factor in sculpturing the earth, so to speak, into its present shape.

Sir Charles Lyell's merits have long been recognized. On the foundation laid by Hutton he erected a solid and imposing structure. No less an authority than Darwin has left on record these words: "The science of geology is enormously indebted to Lyell—more so, I believe, than to any other man who ever lived."

In Geology as in Physics the Scottish school has well maintained its best traditions by contributing greatly to the remarkable advance of the science during the nineteenth century. Among those who conspicuously contributed to this advance Sir Roderick Murchison deserves special mention. By his explorations among what are known as the Transition rocks he added a new chapter to geological science. Sir Archibald Geikie states in his book *The Founders of Geology* that Murchison's four months' labour among the Transition rocks marked a new step in British geology. "It was the first successful foray into these hitherto intractable masses, and prepared the way for all that has since been done in deciphering the

history of the most ancient fossiliferous formations alike in the Old World and the New. At the end of seven years' toil Murchison published his monumental work *The Silurian System*, which forms "a notable epoch in the history of modern geology and entitles its author to be enrolled among the founders of the science."

Coming to later times the science is admirably represented in Scotland by Sir Archibald Geikie and Professor James Geikie, who, with the advantage of being able to apply the fruitful idea of evolution to geology, have been able to weld into an organic whole the scattered discoveries of the past and the present. In one department, that of glaciation, Professor James Geikie's *The Great Ice Age* is recognized as a crowning work of the nineteenth century. Special mention must be made of Hugh Miller, who, in addition to original research, will always be remembered as the popularizer of the science just when it was in danger of being buried in the debris of technical terms.

Turning to the more complex science of organic nature, we find Scottish scientists of the eighteenth century doing excellent work. There is, for instance, William Cullen, who,

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as professor of medicine at Glasgow and afterwards in Edinburgh, gave a marked impetus to scientific knowledge in more than one department. His biographer claims for him that his investigations into heat and cold must not only have directed the attention of his pupil Black to these studies, but must also have furnished him with several of the data for his profound reflections on latent heat. Be that as it may, Cullen, though unduly speculative in his method, made important contributions to the science of medicine. It is claimed that "to him is largely due the recognition of the important part played by the nervous system in health and disease." Many of his speculations "as to the reflex nervous action of sensory and motor fibres, and the connection of sensory and motor fibres, are accepted facts."

The name of Cullen, whose fame rests on his contributions to pathology, suggests the name of John Hunter, who was equally at home in physiology and pathology. Hunter's mind was distinguished by two qualities not often found together—great comprehensiveness of outlook and patient attention to detail.

He had quite a Spencerian passion for width of view, and for the accumulation of facts. Hunter had grasped the modern idea of the continuity of Nature perhaps better than any of his contemporaries. At any rate he made it the guiding idea in his investigations. For instance, in treating of the human body he declared it to be necessary to proceed by the aid of principles derived from a study of animals whose laws again must be studied through the laws of inorganic matter. Quite in the spirit of the evolution theory, Hunter desired to unite all branches of physical science in the order of their development, proceeding from the simple to the complex. His passion for facts saved him from the danger of losing himself in pure speculation. His researches, we are told, covered the whole range of the animal kingdom. He dissected upwards of five hundred different species, exclusive of his dissection of a large number of plants. At the time of his death his museum contained upwards of ten thousand specimens illustrative of human and comparative anatomy, physiology, pathology and natural history. So valuable was the collection that it was purchased



by the Government for £15,000, and presented to the Royal College of Surgeons.

When we come to other sciences, we find Scotsmen taking leading positions. In physiology how much do we owe to Sir Charles Bell's pregnant ideas on the nervous system ! In 1811 Bell published privately a pamphlet setting forth a "New Idea," in which he stated the opinion that "the nerves are not single nerves, possessing various powers, but bundles of different nerves, whose filaments are united for the convenience of distribution, but which are distinct in office as they are in origin from the brain." The value of this pamphlet is shown by the remark of Sir Michael Foster that "our present knowledge of the nervous system is to a large extent only an exemplification and expansion of Charles Bell's 'New Idea,' and has its origins in that."

In what is called cellular physiology, important contributions were made by Professor John Goodsir and his brother. In this department John Goodsir—whose name in the history of science, particularly with reference to the cell-theory, has strangely been allowed to fall into the background—was a pioneer. In 1842 he



communicated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh a paper on secreting structures in which he established the principle that cells are the ultimate secreting agents. In the cells of the liver, kidney, and other organs he recognized the characteristic secretion of each gland. The secretion, he said, was situated between the nucleus and the cell wall. At first he thought the secretion was formed by the agency of the cell wall, but later he regarded it as the product of the nucleus. Full justice in science books has been done to the labours in this connection of Schleiden, Schwann and Virehow, but Scotland's share in the formulation of the cell-doctrine, as represented by Professor John Goodsir, has not had adequate recognition.

In other branches of physiology Scotsmen have done notable work. In embryology Professor Arthur Thomson—who himself deserves honourable mention along with Professor Geddes in the present generation—links the name of Francis Balfour with that of Von Baer, and states that Balfour's monumental text-book (1880-1881) gave a strong stimulus to the study of biology.

In the larger sphere of biology, that dealing

with the origin of species, Scotland has done lasting work. To thinkers of a scientific cast of mind the special creation theory presented great difficulties, and Leslie, as we saw, groped his way to the evolutionary conception that Nature in all her productions "exhibits a chain of perpetual gradations, and that the systematic divisions and limitations are entirely artificial, designed merely to assist the memory and facilitate our conceptions." The evolutionary idea remained in the air, though Lamarck's views now and again cropped up in biological literature. It was not till 1830 that in the persons of distinguished French scientists the creation and the evolutionary theories came into collision at the memorable debate at the Academy of Sciences between Cuvier and Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire. Cuvier clung to the old view, and St. Hilaire contended for the theory of the transmutation of species. Cuvier was believed to have inflicted a crushing defeat upon his rival, and for a time there was a lull in the controversy. In 1844 appeared the *Vestiges of Creation*, by Robert Chambers, and the controversy raged with redoubled fury. Of course Darwin's epoch-making book

superseded all previous attempts to solve the problem. For his pioneering labours in this department Chambers, however, deserves to be held in lasting remembrance. In Germany the problem had been attacked from the side of philosophy, but the speculative methods of Oken, Schelling and Hegel bore no fruit, simply from the absence of scientific method. Chambers attacked the problem on scientific lines. Darwin acknowledged the great value of the book; and perusing it in the light of modern knowledge the student cannot fail to be impressed with the masterly manner in which Chambers surveys the whole field, and marshals his facts in support of the developmental theory. As he puts it, just as the inorganic world had been reduced to unity by one comprehensive law—Gravitation, so in the organic world one all-comprehensive law reigns—Development. It is difficult at this time of day to realize the storm which arose over the *Vestiges*. Science joined hands with theology in denouncing the book, the leading conception of which outlived all attack and found its appropriate setting in the far-reaching, luminous generalization of Darwin.

Strictly speaking, science has discharged its task when it discovers and unifies the laws of phenomena. But the mind of man refuses to rest in phenomena. Beyond the relative it seeks the absolute, and almost unconsciously science encroaches upon philosophy and religion. Living habitually in the world of the concrete, men of science when they go beyond descriptions to explanations of phenomena have a tendency to rest in materialistic views of the world.

Forty years ago it seemed as if philosophy had received its death-blow at the hand of science. George Henry Lewes wrote a history of philosophy with the avowed object of showing that it was mainly a record of futile strivings, of wasted efforts. Science, with its atoms, its molecules, its ether, had taken up the great problems of the Universe and, it was believed, was competent to present a coherent set of intelligible explanations resting on the bed-rock of experience. Science laid claim to have got down to reality, whereas philosophical speculations were supposed to be a kind of bottled moonshine. By and by speculative thinkers began to ask, What is this Reality

about which men of science talk so glibly? Science does not talk quite so glibly now, though even yet the old dogmatic note is heard. Men like Haeckel in Germany, and distinguished speakers at British Association meetings, talk about the Universe and its constitution in terms of Matter and Energy as if these terms were fundamental and exhaustive, instead of being symbolical and provisional. It can be claimed for the Scottish school that its distinguished members have refused to coquet with materialism, and in regard to the ultimate problems God, the world and man, have been in close agreement with religion and philosophy. Striking evidence of this is furnished by the suggestive book, *The Unseen Universe*, by the distinguished Scottish scientists of their day, Messrs. Balfour Stewart and Tait. However much the Scottish scientists of the eighteenth century were opposed to the rigid Calvinism of their time, their deistic mode of thought kept them free of materialism, which extensively prevailed in France, and which in our day has found expression in the writings of English and German men of science.

In its interpretation of science philosophy in



Scotland has consistently opposed materialism. Professor Pringle Pattison fitly represents the attitude of the Scottish school when he dwells upon the futility of all attempts "to explain human life in terms of the merely animal, to explain life in terms of the inorganic, and ultimately to find a sufficient formula for the cosmic process in terms of the redistribution of Matter and Motion." Thanks to the effective philosophical criticism of thinkers like Professor Pringle Pattison, a great change has come over scientists. The more thoughtful no longer mistake their descriptions of phenomena for explanations, and acknowledge that the mystery of the Universe lies beyond the reach of their mechanical categories. It is now being recognized by the rising generation of scientists that all attempts to convert atoms, ether, or energy, into ultimates, end in futility. Nothing could bring into clearer light the victorious nature of Professor Pringle Pattison's battle with materialism than the following admission by a brilliant Scottish scientist who is rapidly coming to the front, Professor Arthur Thomson, who thus refers to the inevitable limitations of the mechanical explanations of things: "When



we consider any particular corner in the inanimate world, say the making of the Niagara Falls, or the making of the frost flowers on the window, we do not require in our redescription more than mechanical formulæ; but when we consider Nature, not in isolated pieces, but as a harmonious whole, the progressive order, the orderly progress, and the beauty of it all, when we go on to recognize that the earth has been the parent of its tenants, then we must read back into the world-egg with which we start a potentiality of giving rise to all that follows." What is this but saying in the language of science, what Professor Pringle Pattison says in the language of philosophy, that "if the Universe is one, we have to read back the nature of the latest consequent into the remotest antecedent."

So long as the materialist view of Nature prevailed, so long as the great Cosmic processes were conceived in terms of mechanics, the feeling of wonder and the sense of mystery were repressed. It is now admitted that vital processes such as the phenomena of life cannot be expressed in terms of physics and chemistry, and that between the physics of the brain and

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consciousness there is a great gulf fixed. Scientists are coming to see that the philosophers were right who contended that Nature should be interpreted through man, rather than man through Nature. Science has severe limitations, to which the leaders of to-day are keenly alive. In their writings there is none of the crude philosophy and boastfulness which characterized the writings of the materialists of the mid-nineteenth century. The difference is well marked in the following passage from Professor Arthur Thomson's *Bible of Nature*: "It is the work of science to reduce things to a common denominator or to a simple beginning, such as matter, energy and ether, or the life of a protoplast. This sort of analysis and genetic description clears up obscurities, affords a basis for action, and is in any case forced upon us by our desire to unravel things to refund phenomena into their antecedent conditions. But it does not satisfy the human spirit, partly because the common denominator is in itself mysterious, partly because science never tells us why so much should come out of apparently little." What is the conclusion of the whole matter? In the words of Pro-

fessor Thomson : “ Many scientific thinkers who can find no resting-place in science alone agree with the author of the *Foundations of Belief* (Mr. Balfour) when he says : ‘ I do not believe that any escape from these perplexities is possible unless we are prepared to bring to the study of the world the presupposition that it was the work of a rational being who made it intelligible, and at the same time made us, in however feeble a fashion, able to understand it.’ ” Interpret man through Nature, as the leading scientists of a former generation did, and you bind humanity fast in fate and deprive life of all rational purpose. Interpret Nature through man, after the manner of the new school of scientists, and you make possible the view that through the ages an increasing purpose runs, and that the highest instincts of the soul are not delusive by-products, but prophetic hints of a life that will bloom and blossom elsewhere.

Science when philosophically interpreted leads the mind into the region of religion. In the words of John Fiske, one of the most brilliant expounders of science from the evolutionary standpoint—

“The God of the scientific philosopher is still, and must ever be, the God of the Christian, though freed from the illegitimate formulæ by the aid of which theology has sought to render Deity comprehensible. What is this wonderful dynamic which manifests itself to our consciousness in harmonic activity throughout the length and breadth and depth of the Universe, which guides the stars for countless ages in the paths that never err, and which animates the molecules of the dewdrop that gleams for a brief hour on the shaven lawn—whose workings are so resistless that we have nought to do but reverently obey them; yet so infallible that we can place our unshaken trust in them, yesterday, to-day, and for ever? . . . Here science must ever reverently pause, acknowledging the presence of the mystery of mysteries. Here religion must ever hold sway, reminding us that from birth until death we are dependent on a Power to whose eternal decrees we must submit, to whose dispensations we must resign ourselves, and upon whose constancy we may implicitly rely.” And thus at the end of their discoveries and interpretations science and philosophy in the Cathedral of Immensity unite with religion in worshipping in awe and adoration the God of the Shorter Catechism—“a spirit infinite, eternal and unchangeable.”

# THE ECONOMIC MOVEMENT





## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ECONOMIC MOVEMENT

IN studying the intellectual development of Scotland, it is necessary to remember that the revolt against Rome as the embodiment of the principle of authority had two aspects—the religious and the intellectual. In Scotland, in the name of religious liberty, Protestantism won the battle. The battle for intellectual liberty is usually associated with the Renaissance, though Protestantism in the conflict lent its powerful aid. It was inevitable that the liberating process once begun should extend to other sections of national life, and thus it came about that the revolt against authority spread by and by to the spheres of politics and industry. In its long despotic reign the Roman Catholic Church had a powerful ally in Feudalism. The very desire for liberty was

treated as a crime. The religious man who claimed the right to dissent from the Church was a heretic; the political man who rose against consecrated despotism was a traitor; and the labourer who claimed the right to work for himself was a rebel serf. With the overthrow of Romanism and Feudalism as the dominant factors in civilization, and the breakdown of the old theocratic conception of social and national life, there naturally grew up a demand for a new theory of civilization. In Scotland this desire found expression in the writings of Hutcheson, the founder of Moderatism. Moderatism, as has been seen, made its influence felt in all departments of the national life; it aspired to be something more than the opponent of Calvinism. In opposition to the old theocratic regime with its divine-right theory that Church and State were entitled to absolute sway over the individual, Hutcheson formulated another divine-right theory—that of the individual to control himself under the guidance of enlightened self-interest. Hutcheson's contention was that the aims of Nature—which is the expression of the Divine will—were best realized, and harmony of interests

secured by freeing the individual from despotisms which claimed to have theocratic sanction. Adam Smith always acknowledged his indebtedness to Hutcheson, an indebtedness which is perfectly obvious when regard is had to the fundamental ideas of the *Wealth of Nations*. It is necessary to make the relations between the two thinkers quite clear, as there is a current opinion that in regard to economic science Smith's ideas were imported from France. Even Carlyle falls into this mistake when, in his essay on Burns, he says "it was Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp in Adam Smith." That Adam Smith when in France conversed with Turgot and Quesnay on economic subjects is well known, but that he was indebted to them for the fundamental ideas of his *Wealth of Nations* is quite erroneous. When he was in the Chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, Adam Smith, as early as 1752, embodied in the form of lectures the ideas of the *Wealth of Nations*. The year before Quesnay published his system Smith had expounded his theory of natural liberty. French and English writers have claimed Quesnay as the spiritual father of Adam Smith, whereas

Smith himself always considered Hutcheson as his great teacher. In a word, Smith's economic theories in their main outline were fully laid before his visit to France.

There is no such thing as absolute originality, and Adam Smith would have repudiated the notion that he spun his economic philosophy entirely out of his own brain. In addition to Hutcheson he owed much to Hume, who was a master of the whole subject. Adam Smith's position in economics resembles Darwin's in biology. Thinkers before Darwin had speculated about species on the lines of evolution, just as thinkers before Smith had been groping for a key to economic problems. As I have said elsewhere: "Smith's work was epoch-making for the reasons that made Darwin's epoch-making; Smith laid bare the secret mechanism by which Nature, when duly obeyed, makes the industrial world an harmonious and organic whole. The secret mechanism which is disclosed in the *Wealth of Nations* is the power of self-interest when duly safeguarded by liberty and justice to produce industrial harmony in the sphere of wealth production and exchanges. Just as Darwin

contends that the best biological results in Nature are obtained when the great competitive forces among organisms are allowed liberty to operate, so Smith contends that the best industrial results are secured when, under the necessary conditions of liberty and justice, the competitive self-interests of free men are allowed sway."

At this stage we detect the influence of Moderatism, which as a reaction against the theological doctrine of human depravity, had much to say of the natural goodness of man, a conception which underlies Adam Smith's book the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In making sympathy the basis of morality, Smith clearly assumes that men in the pursuit of their own self-interest have a natural sympathy with one another and out of the feelings of dependence and mutual helpfulness there result social harmony. As he puts it, in civilized society man stands at all times in need of the co-operation of his fellows and the assistance of great multitudes, and in these circumstances man can only satisfactorily connect himself with his fellows through the medium of reciprocity of services—a process



which optimists of the time believed invested self-interest with ethical and social qualities.

Now we come to an all-important aspect of Adam Smith's economic philosophy. If freedom of trade is essential to home industry, it is also, he declared, essential to foreign trade. For centuries trade and commerce were carried on under the prevalence of the notion that in these matters the interests of the several nations were inherently antagonistic. Under the influence of the old mercantile theory what one nation gained another was supposed to lose. In the words of Adam Smith, each nation has been made to look with an invidious eye upon the prosperity of all the nations with which it trades and to consider their trade as its own loss. "As a rich man is likely to be a better customer to the industrious people in a neighbourhood than a poor, so is likewise a rich nation. . . . Private people who want to make a fortune never think of retiring to the remote and poor provinces of the country, but resort either to the capital or to some of the great commercial towns. They know that where little wealth circulates there is little to be got; but where a great deal is in motion some share



of it may fall to them. The same maxim which would in this matter direct the common sense of one, or ten, or twenty individuals, should regulate the judgment of one, ten, or twenty millions, and should make a whole nation regard the riches of its neighbours as a probable cause and occasion for itself to acquire riches. A nation that would enrich itself by foreign trade is certainly most likely to do so when its neighbours are all rich, industrious and commercial nations.”

The *Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776, and immediately arrested attention, though its political influence was checked by the reaction caused by the French Revolution, which also, as we noticed, checked the influence of Moderatism in the sphere of religion. In both the religious and the political, the principle of natural liberty which inspired Smith’s great work was, as the result of the Revolution, identified with anarchy. Still the *Wealth of Nations* found a friendly reception in high quarters. In the House of Commons Pitt sympathetically referred to the book, whose influence made itself felt in the purification of the tariff in later years. Inspired by Adam

Smith's ideas Gladstone and Cobden still further popularized Free Trade, with results familiar to every student of British history. Under the guidance of the idea of natural liberty which was the ruling thought in the minds of Hutcheson and the Moderates, and which is the basal conception of the *Wealth of Nations*, the work of emancipation has gone forward in all directions. A commercial policy resting on Free Trade, a foreign policy based on the idea of national liberty and independence, a legal code making for equality before the law and freedom from the fetters of feudalism, ecclesiastical freedom from Erastianian interference—these and numerous other emancipatory movements drew their inspiration from the idea of natural liberty which on the economic side received such powerful exposition and advocacy from Adam Smith.

A thinker of the first rank is known by the amount of controversial literature which his writings call forth. Judged by that standard Adam Smith's position in the intellectual realm is beyond dispute. As in the cases of Newton and Darwin, Smith reduced to order a whole set of phenomena which, up till he

wrote, was in a condition of chaos. No man is infallible, and since Smith's day Political Economy as a science has undergone considerable modifications, but the fundamental ideas remain untouched. Even those who have a leaning to Protection admit that complete Free Trade is the true economic ideal, and their differences of opinion with their opponents revolve round the question whether in the present condition of Continental nations, bristling as they are with hostile tariffs and armed to the teeth, a medium policy of a retaliatory nature might not be beneficial. These differences, however, do not affect the fact of Adam Smith's world-wide influence. At his feet the modern students of the science still sit. It is related that on one occasion Pitt met Smith at the London house of Dundas. Smith was late in arriving, and immediately the whole company rose to receive him. "Be seated, gentlemen," said Smith. "No," replied Pitt, "we will stand till you are the first seated, for we are all your scholars." These words of Pitt find an echo in the modern mind—we are all his scholars.

Since the time of Adam Smith economic

science has undergone marked changes. Resting on an optimistic theory of life, the Smithian system in the hands of the Ricardo school tended to pessimism. A firm believer in the beneficence of Nature, Adam Smith would have welcomed the vast powers which science has given mankind over material forces; were he alive to-day he certainly would be disappointed with the comparatively small contribution which science has made to social well-being. In this regard the high hopes of thinkers of the past have not been realized. Bacon, for instance, looked upon science, with the great command which it gave man over the forces of Nature, as the pioneer of a kind of millennial bliss for the human race. As he put it: "The real and true goal of the sciences is nothing else than the enrichment of human life by the introduction of new inventions and resources." Knowledge of Nature meant power over Nature, and once this was gained there was expected as a natural consequence a widespread diffusion of leisure and comfort. Science, in the form of mechanical inventions, was expected to so lighten the labour of humanity that the individual, freed from

degrading toil, would develop rapidly along the lines of physical, intellectual, and moral improvement. The extent to which science has contributed to the labour power of the world was strikingly shown by Sir William Ramsay in his recent presidential address to the British Association. No civilization worthy of the name can be built up without leisure. Greece was able to shine with an intellectual splendour which is the admiration of the world, and that simply because the necessary leisure was procured by what was practically slave labour. In the words of Sir William Ramsay :

“A large proportion of the people had had ample leisure. They had time to think and to discuss what they thought. How was this achieved? The answer was simple; each Greek freeman had on an average at least five helots who did his bidding, who worked his mines, looked after his farm, and, in short, saved him from manual labour. Now we in Britain were much better off; the population of the British Isles was in round numbers 45,000,000; there were consumed in our factories at least 50,000,000 tons of coal annually, and it is generally agreed that the consumption



of coal per indicated horse-power per hour is on an average about 5lb. This gave 7,000,000 horse-power per year. Seven million horse-power were about 175,000,000 man-power. Taking a family as consisting on the average of five persons, our 45,000,000 would represent 9,000,000 families; and dividing the total man-power by the number of families, we must conclude that each British family had, on the average, nearly twenty 'helots' doing his bidding, instead of the five of the Athenian family."

One would be entitled to expect from this greatly-increased mechanical power a corresponding increase of leisure. How far we are from this is seen when we contrast the high hopes of Bacon and the philosophers of the enlightenment in France and England with the sombre statement of John Stuart Mill as follows: "Hitherto it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make fortunes. They



have increased the comforts of the middle classes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny which it is in their nature and futurity to accomplish." So that the upshot is that science, with its mechanical inventions, has done little or nothing to secure the needful distribution of wealth which makes leisure and a command of the comforts of life universal possessions. Further, science, from the side of economics and biology, has done much to justify the existing unsatisfactory state of affairs. In the hands of Ricardo, political economy helped on the movement towards wealth monopoly by teaching that high profits could only be possible through low wages, and as high profits were said to be the motive powers of national prosperity, increased leisure and increased wages were out of the question. Next came Malthus, who, from the population side, showed that there were no covers laid at Nature's table for the poor man. Following upon this came Darwin, who showed that progress was achieved through a struggle for existence, in which the weakest must go to the wall, and of course, in the industrial struggle, the weakest was the

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worker. Improvement in his position was not encouraged by Nature.

In the hands of some of Darwin's followers the theory assumed most forbidding forms. Huxley, for example, conceived life as a huge Donnybrook, in which head-splitting and general turmoil were reduced to a science. Those who succeeded in the struggle were the elect, the favoured ones. Science, in a word, became Calvinistic. Quite on the lines of the old theological doctrine of election, Haeckel, quoting Scripture, declared that "many were called, but few were chosen."

In the ranks of science within recent years there has grown up a reaction against the gladiator theory of existence. Prince Kropotkin did good service, not only to the science of biology, but also to the science of Society, when in his book, *Mutual Aid*, he showed that the struggle for existence had been grossly exaggerated, if not caricatured, by the early Darwinians. More influential in primitive times than ruthless competition is a sense of human solidarity. Then came the late Professor Drummond, with his illuminating view that along with the struggle for self there has

gone on all through history a struggle for others. Out of this has grown family life and the opportunities for self-sacrifice and all the higher virtues which have given a halo of the divine to human life. Among the rising biologists, Darwinism is now interpreted on democratic rather than on aristocratic lines, as may be seen from the writings of two Scottish scientists, Professor Arthur Thomson and Professor Patrick Geddes. Hitherto science has been too much left in the hands of specialists, who have pursued their studies in a mechanical way, utterly regardless of its bearing upon the great surging life of humanity.

Messrs. Thomson and Geddes are idealists. Both writers in criticism of the Huxley school have emphasized the social side of evolution—the side which takes account of the part which co-operation, as opposed to competition, has played in civilization. In their view “it is possible to interpret the ideals of ethical progress through love and sociality, co-operation and sacrifice, not as mere Utopias contradicted by experience, but as the highest expressions of the central evolutionary process of the natural world.” Such a view of life has

important practical consequences. In dealing with man as a social being we must substitute co-operation for competition, brotherly help for friendless rivalry.

Science, in the early Darwinian days, was decidedly materialistic. In the hands of the new school it is pre-eminently idealistic. It aims at beautifying as well as interpreting life, and as evidence of this may be noted the great success of the attempt of Professor Geddes from the standpoint of science, to give a more humane touch to political economy and to the beautifying of civic life. Democracy has never taken kindly to science, simply because of its aristocratic tendencies, but with the advent of the new spirit we may expect the beginning of a new era in which knowledge will indeed be power; not a power to be wielded in the interests of the few, but a power to be employed for the elevation of the many in all that makes life worth living.

Thinkers to-day are learning the truth which previous thinkers failed quite to appreciate, that environment is more potent as a factor in social evolution than has been hitherto supposed. Heredity lay for a time with fatalistic

weight on humanity, and had much to do with the pessimism of Darwinism. Thanks to the new school, we are learning to put heredity in its proper place, and to recognize the vast influence which environment plays in the moulding of the race. No progress could be made in social reform, for instance, so long as it was believed that the children of the slums were doomed to evil, and could not be changed, no matter how you changed their surroundings. The new school of Darwinians recognize the great influence of environment, and, while not ignoring heredity, have given a biological interpretation of Society which gives room for the larger hope. They have facts to justify their hopeful creed. The Poor Law Inspector of Glasgow has given it as his opinion that, provided you take the children of dissolute parents early enough away from their slum surroundings, they cannot be said to suffer at all from their birth environment. He supports his view by figures which go to show that out of some 630 children sent by him to the country and kept under close observation for years, only twenty-three turned out bad. The old Darwinians would not



have troubled about these children. They were doomed at their birth, and it was going against Nature to strive against the curse of heredity. Democracy can now hail as a friend the new spirit which has sprung up in science within recent years. The old gladiator school is dead. The alliance between Science and Democracy is hopeful for the future. Democracy needs guidance; and economic science with something of the optimism of Adam Smith, incorporated as it now is with Sociology, can supply the guidance of which Democracy, in a complex civilization, stands in special need.



THE LITERARY SPIRIT



## CHAPTER IX

### THE LITERARY SPIRIT

It is greatly to be regretted that the spirit of partisanship has entered so deeply into the study of Scottish history. It might be expected that on a subject like literature it would be possible for writers to leave behind the heated atmosphere of ecclesiastical controversy and rise into the ampler air of cultured serenity. Instead, in the case of literature as in the case of science, we find fierce antagonism toward the Church for what is called its obstructive influence upon the purely human side of Scotland's development. Echoing Buckle, disciples of the Humanist cult are never weary of dilating upon the disastrous effects of the Reformation upon the literary side of Scotland. They point to the brilliant outburst of Scottish literary genius in the pre-Reformation period and contrast it with the blight that followed

the religious struggle. What is the real explanation? Simply this, as has already been pointed out: the literature of the golden age remained feudalistic when the nation was preparing to enter the path which ultimately brought it within the sweep of the great industrial epoch with the rise of the middle classes. The poetry of the time had no vital connection with the new ideas which were in the end to destroy both Feudalism and Romanism. It is a remarkable fact, which bears out this line of thought, that the one man of letters of the pre-Reformation period who lives in popular memory was Sir David Lyndsay. Why? Because he busied himself not with fantastical allegories of a dying civilization, but with the ideas and feelings which were ushering in the new time. The golden age was ended not by the Reformation, but by its own inherent weakness. It breathed the spirit of stagnation notwithstanding its close connection with the Renaissance; it lived in a dying world, and had no vital relation to the world which was being born.

Another aspect of the question remains. Is it true that the Reformation was inherently

hostile to literature and the new learning generally? That the Reformers were not likely to take kindly to Humanism as it was represented in the semi-Paganism of Italian authors and reflected in much of the objectionable poetry of Scottish writers is highly probable. In their revolt from the doctrinal side of Romanism the Humanists in too many cases revolted also from the ethieal side; the result being a kind of literature which, to put it mildly, did not make for righteousness. The Humanists, in their rebound from the ethieal strictness of the supernatural theory of life, went to the other extreme, and revelled in a laxity which speedily ended in open and unabashed immorality. Poetry was used not to reveal the ideal, but to glorify the sensual. In their stern battle against Rome, whose moral corruption was as palpable as its theological and ecclesiastical errors, the Reformers were not likely to get much help from a band of literary Pagans who were offering incense at the altar of a degrading naturalism.

That the Reformers had no hostility to learning and literature as such is plain from the great effort they made to foster the

intellectual spirit after the downfall of the Romish Church. In remodelling the curriculum at the Universities they gave attention to the various departments of the newest learning of their time. Science and literature were favoured. In pressing their scheme upon the nobility the Reformers said: "If God shall give your wisdoms grace to set forward letters in the sort prescribed, ye shall leave wisdom and learning to your posterity—a treasure more to be esteemed than any earthly treasure ye are able to amass for them." In 1563 a petition was presented to the Queen and Lords of articles requesting reform of the University, "in the name of all that within this realm are desyrous that leirning and letters floreis." The avarice of the nobility was stronger than their love of learning, and the Reformers petitioned in vain.

So far from the Reformers being obstructionists in the sphere of learning and letters, the truth is that the ideals of men like Knox and particularly Melville were high enough and wide enough to include all the intellectual elements of a well-ordered social state. Only ignorance of the literary history of Scotland



at the time of the Reformation can explain the constant assertion that intolerance and fanaticism caused a blight to fall upon the Scottish intellect. In strict truth it was only at the Reformation that the mind of Scotland in science and literature received its proper bent. It was only at the Reformation that Scotland became a nation—one in religion, in belief, in sentiment, and in feeling. It was only at the Reformation that Scotland rescued the individual from the tyranny of the feudal despotism of the nobles as well as from the spiritual despotism of the Pope. It was only at the Reformation that in the national mind were sown the seeds of the great literary harvest which was to come to fruition in the eighteenth century. That the harvest did not come sooner was not the fault of the Reformers. That this is so is clear from the earnest efforts made under Andrew Melville for the higher education of Scotland, and the great enthusiasm which existed for classical learning as well as for theology.

The influence of the Reformation in the development of the literary spirit is admitted by no less an authority than the late Professor

Masson. In his chapter, "Literary History of Edinburgh" in his *Edinburgh Sketches and Memoirs*, he says: "The first eighty years of the sixteenth century may be regarded (the pre-Reformation authorship and the first Reformation authorship taken together) as one definitely-marked stage, and the earliest in the literary history of Edinburgh. It was an age of high credit to Scottish literary history all in all."

And yet the fact remains that the literary impulse given by the Reformation was not sustained. A period of intellectual stagnation set in. That it was not due to what has been called the intolerance and fanaticism of the Reformers has been abundantly shown. To what, then, was it due? It was due to the fact that Scotland had other things to think about than poetry and *belles lettres*. To her was allotted the task of fighting for the fundamental basis of all mental activity, the right to think for herself on religious and ecclesiastical questions. Without independence in these matters no real enduring literature was possible; and while the great battle so victoriously won by the Covenanters and embodied

in the Revolution Settlement was in process, the cultivation of literature seemed as much out of place as Nero's fiddling performances while Rome was burning. The cultivation of the Muses is fit only for a time of social stability and leisure. The Reformers and Covenanters fought the great battle of liberty, and it ill becomes those who have entered into their work to traduce their memories and belittle their labours. The literary development interrupted by the contest with Episcopacy made a fresh start when social order was secured by the disappearance of the Stewarts from the scene.

Naturally repressed during the long period of ecclesiastical and political turmoil, the literary side of Scotland made a fresh start with the opening of the eighteenth century. Naturally, too, the development took the form of a reaction from the ideals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the nature of the case those ideals were somewhat narrow and exclusive. Protestantism, as represented by the Covenanting section, drew much too sharp a line between sacred and secular. They modelled the national life too

closely upon the Hebrew Theocracy, and treated as unworthy of the serious consideration of men the Hellenic side of human nature—the side which finds expression in literature and art. In the time of storm and stress literature could not thrive, but with some measure of political and social stability and peace it was natural that the Scottish mind should seek to break away from the narrow groove of ecclesiasticism.

In the form of literary activity which sprang up after the Union we can distinctly trace the influence of the reaction. The eighteenth-century temperament in Scotland, averse to the supernatural, turned readily to the natural. The new movement drew its inspiration largely from France, and showed itself in a fondness, in all forms of thought and activity, for qualities and ideals in direct opposition to the Covenanting regime. Instead of the Calvinism of the Reformation and Covenanting periods, we have in the eighteenth century the Humanism of Continental thinkers, particularly the French. In the theological literature of the one period man is viewed as a helpless, depraved being, utterly unfit, apart

from Divine help, to rise in the scale of being; in the theological literature of the Humanist period we have man represented as a self-regulating being, capable of following the dictates of an enlightened self-interest. The theological literature of the eighteenth century, as shown in the pages of Hutcheson and Blair, finds its explanation in the fact that the preachers of the time had moved away from the vivid supernaturalism of the early period. The Moderates substituted the watchword Culture for the old Calvinistic watchword Regeneration; and Culture became the watchword in all branches of Scottish eighteenth-century literature. The thinkers of that century, wearied of the strife of the previous century, yearned for a social state from which theological disputes and ideas were banished, and instead there reigned comfort, ease, good breeding and good-fellowship. Tired of the strenuous life of the battle-field, they yearned for the calm of the study and the drawing-room.

We find this feeling reflected in philosophy as well as in theology. It dictated the efforts of Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith to



dissociate moral philosophy from theology. It set them, in opposition to the theologians, to seek in human nature, apart from supernatural stimulus, all the necessary inspiration for a well-balanced and cultured humanity. The Hutcheson school, in short, adopted the theory of life which had long been dominant in England and France. In historical writing, too, we trace influences which had their root in the Humanist movement of the eighteenth century. Here supernaturalism is conspicuously absent. Robertson is quite Voltairian in his methods, and Adam Ferguson quite plainly draws his inspiration from Montesquieu. Hume is notoriously secular in his tone, and Adam Smith's conception of society, as revealed in his *Wealth of Nations*, leaves no room for the theory for which the Covenanters so strenuously fought. In all this we are far removed from the Headship of Christ. The Scottish thinkers did not, like their French brethren, break violently with the current creed; they simply ignored it. They were Deists, not Atheists. God was thought of as a monarch who reigned but did not govern. Man, endowed with reason, was



perfectly able to find his way about without supernatural guidance.

When we come to poetry we also detect the influence of the Humanist movement. Given a conception of man in which the elements of mysticism and enthusiasm are absent, in which the admired qualities are good-nature, politeness, dignity, and decorum, and the imaginative literature will faithfully reflect the conception. Shakespeare, with his almost Calvinistic dealings with the supernatural, his fierce energy, his portrayal of the diabolic element in humanity, will be unpopular. In Voltairian language, he will be treated as a barbarian. To the mild loungers of the drawing-room poetry will be nothing if not decorous, measured, correct, pleasing, not rousing, soothing, not stimulating. This is exactly what we find in the poetry of the eighteenth century. Everything was done by rule. Even when in Thomson's *Seasons* there is a distinct feeling for Nature, we are very far from any higher conception of Nature than that of a piece of wonderful mechanism, the contemplation of which gives pleasure. But the imagination will not be satisfied with

the bald literalness of mere scientific description, so, to make it poetie, Nature had to be dotted over with absurd shepherds and shepherdesses and all kinds of semi-mythological extravagances.

Hitherto Seottish literature had been largely imitative. French models were slavishly followed in history, essay-writing, and literary critieism. Everything was sacrificed to correctness—so much that Hume could not tolerate Shakespeare, whose great outbursts of energy and feeling were diseoneerting to the nerves of the frigid school. In the main, the literary development of Scotland had been of the self-conscious and hot-house type. A new phase is associated with Allan Ramsay. Somewhat of a Pagan in his methods and ideals, Ramsay gave to the poetry of his time what it sorely needed—naturalness and spontaneity. Moreover, he fought for a natural poetry. He protested against the imitative school. Ramsay restored feeling to its proper place in poetry. He broke down the artificial dykes which had been constructed by the eritics of the imitative classieal school, and allowed the emotions to play freely upon the ever-changing

phenomena of Nature and life. To be in the fashion, Ramsay, of course, had to be anti-ecclesiastical, and in order to be that it was thought necessary also to be anti-moral, with the result that in his poetry Naturalism at times runs riot. Making allowance for the low standard of his age in these matters, Allan Ramsay deserves high praise as perhaps the first Scottish poet who broke down the notion that poetry was mainly a product of the schools, and was intended only for the learned few. In Fergusson the humble side of Scottish life found another representative. In his verses we have a kind of prophetic anticipation of Burns. The Pagan element, which appears in Ramsay's verses only, appeared in the life of Fergusson, and the result we all know. The eighteenth-century reaction from the ideals of the seventeenth century too often acted with disastrous effect in the sphere of personal morality and happiness—a fact which finds dramatic illustration in the career of Robert Burns.



## BURNS AND HIS EPOCH





## CHAPTER X

### BURNS AND HIS EPOCH

BEFORE attempting to define the place of Burns in Scottish literature it may be well to clear away some misconceptions to which Taine, the great French critic, has given currency. In his *English Literature*, he traces the inspirational ideas of Burns largely to German and French sources. In the words of Taine: "Thus rises the modern man impelled by two sentiments, one democratic, the other philosophic. From the shallows of his poverty and ignorance he rises with effort, lifting the weight of established society and admitted dogmas, disposed either to reform or to destroy them, and at once generous and rebellious. These two currents from France and Germany at this moment swept into England. The dykes were so strong they could hardly force their way, entering more slowly than elsewhere, but entering neverthe-

less. The new spirit broke out first in a Scotch peasant, Robert Burns."

Taine's tendency to sum up historic epochs in neat portable generalizations never led him farther astray than in his attempt to define the intellectual environment of Burns. Till Carlyle began to write, Scotland knew next to nothing of German speculative philosophy. True, De Quincey and Coleridge had dabbled in transcendentalism, but it will hardly be contended that these writers lived in the Burns period. There is more plausibility in the view that Burns was subject to French influence, notably Rousseau. Between Burns and Rousseau there is undoubted resemblance. Both sprang from the people, both were at war with the conventionality of their time, and both broke away from the classical standard of literature. But it is surely going beyond the mark to argue from resemblance to discipleship. It does not follow that because both writers adopted a new attitude towards Nature, for instance, that Burns took his keynote from Rousseau.

The truth is, Scotland before France showed a tendency to naturalism as opposed to classic

artificiality. This fact is admitted by Taine when, in dealing with the poetry of Thomson, he says: "Thirty years before Rousseau Thomson had expressed all Rousseau's sentiments, almost in the same style. Like him, he painted the country with sympathy and enthusiasm. Like him, he contrasted the golden age of primitive simplicity with modern miseries and corruptions. Like him, he praised patriotism, liberty, virtue; rose from the spectacle of Nature to the contemplation of God, and showed man glimpses of immortal life beyond the tomb." Clearly we must look elsewhere than to Rousseau for the intellectual environment of Burns. Suppose we look nearer home. We can fairly well account for the intellectual outlook of Burns without going outside our own island. Burns appeared upon the scene when two antagonistic theories of man and society were contending for mastery—Calvinism and Moderatism.

It is sometimes represented as if Burns were drawn into opposition to Calvinism by the harsh treatment which he received at the hands of the Evangelical party. That treatment no doubt inspired his attacks on Calvinism, but

there is evidence that Burns in earnest Scottish fashion had silently grappled with the tremendous problems of life, was well read in the theological literature of his time, and gave the Moderate theory full intellectual consent. For evidence let us take the letter written by Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, dated June 21, 1789, in which, after distinctly repudiating the Calvinistic tenets as presented in a sermon which he had just heard, he goes on to give his own confession of faith in quite the style of Hutcheson and his disciples—the existence of God, the eternal distinction between virtue and vice, a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave. To Rousseau Burns was not indebted for his creed. It was in the main the outcome of a powerful mind, working on the facts of life, and aided in its operations by the teachings of Hutcheson, Blair and Adam Smith, whose theory of the moral sentiment he quoted in one of his letters. At the same time it would be a mistake to define Burns as a Moderate of the ordinary type. The average Moderate was terribly at ease in Zion. His theory of life with its rosy optimism, well enough suited for the literary club and drawing-room, was

quite inadequate to the terrible facts of life as seen from the standpoint of the toiling peasant. Far removed from the stern realities and drudgery of existence among the poor, the philosophers of the drawing-room could talk of this as the best possible world, and close their eyes to the struggles of the common people, who were described even by a man like Hume as the "vulgar." Burns knew only too well that many things in human nature and society were more easily explained by Calvinism than by Moderatism. There was, for instance, the strange antagonism between the higher and the lower nature of man, in theological language, between the flesh and the spirit. Burns knew by sad experience what the self-satisfied Moderate with his gospel of culture did not know, the truth that lay under the Pauline distinction between Nature and grace, and he could echo in the midst of his agonizing hours of remorse the words of the Apostle: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Burns had intellectual breadth and religious susceptibility enough to appropriate what was



best in the two phases of the religious thought of his time. Thus it happened that while the average Moderate looked upon Calvinism as represented by the Covenanters as a detestable fanaticism, an enemy to the amenities of social life, Burns paid tribute to their magnificent stand for liberty. And this brings me to the common opinion, to which Taine gives expression, that Burns owed his democratic fervour to Rousseau and the French Revolution. As a matter of fact, long before the democratic note was sounded in France, Scotland was familiar with the full-blown creed of democracy. Democratic fervour was in the blood of the Scottish people from the time of George Buchanan onward. Long before Locke and Rousseau opposed the doctrine of divine right of kings and advocated the right of rebellion against despotism, Scottish thinkers had formulated theories of government which were totally irreconcilable with all kinds of despotism. Long before Rousseau, Samuel Rutherford wrote his famous *Lex Rex*, the political text-book of the Covenanters, in which it is laid down that king and beggar sprang of one clay. If all men are equally free, there is



no reason in Nature why one man should be king and lord over another. Royal power, according to Rutherford, is vested in the people alone, and they may take it away if the conditions upon which it is given are violated. On the basis of this the Covenanters refused to recognize the Stewarts and their divine right theory. Burns, who had Covenanting blood in his veins, had no need to go to Rousseau for his democratic fervour. His "A man's a man for a' that" owes infinitely more to Samuel Rutherford than to Rousseau.

The thought of the eighteenth century was essentially aristocratic. The people were constantly spoken of as the "vulgar." The political creed of Deism tended to Toryism. The common people were utilized in posing for artistic purposes. They were used in poetry mainly for picturesque ends. True, Allan Ramsay brings us into contact with real flesh and blood among the humbler ranks, but even with him there is an element of condescension. Burns with his "A man's a man for a' that" struck a vein which in these days has been worked out in numerous directions, religious, social and political. In

harmony with his advanced views of humanity was the joy with which Burns hailed the French Revolution as the harbinger of a new day : " When man to man the world o'er shall brithers be an' a' that."

The new way of viewing man naturally led Burns to a new way of viewing Nature. With one stroke he abolished the mythological machinery of his predecessors, and used Nature as a vehicle for the expression of human thoughts and feelings. The work of Burns may be summed up as follows : He broke down the shallow deistic philosophy of human nature to which he was intellectually attracted by showing its insufficiency in his own case to satisfy the infinite hunger of the heart, or tame the wild surgings of his passions. Moreover, he broke down the shallow optimism of the Deists by revealing, outside of the drawing-room area of frigid philosophers, a world of humanity seething with sorrow, misery, and injustice ; and by demanding justice in the name of humanity for the lowliest of mortals, he gave a great impetus to the democratic spirit which sprang up in Scotland at the close of the eighteenth century. Further, Burns, by bringing Nature

and man into direct contact broke the spell of the classical theory of poetry, and paved the way for the great literary revolution of the opening years of the nineteenth century.

It may be justly claimed for Burns that he was a genuine product of Scottish life and thought. No attempts to dissect his environment will reach the secret of his genius, but it is something to know that the influences which made him what he was intellectually were of native origin. And Burns has repaid his debt to his country by being in a very special sense one of the makers of modern Scotland. When he began to write, leading Scotsmen had grown ashamed of their native language. Moderatism, which set the fashion in literature, thought itself too cosmopolitan to be patriotic. To be a citizen of the great world of letters was considered of greater moment than to be a genuine Scot. In one of his matchless Burns orations Lord Rosebery puts this very well when he says: "From the time of the Union of the Crowns, and still more from the legislative Union, Scotland had lapsed into obscurity. Except for an occasional Jacobite rising her existence was almost

forgotten. She had, indeed, her Robertsons and her Humes writing history to general admiration, but no trace of Scottish authorship was discernible in their works; indeed, every flavour of national idiom was carefully excluded. The Scottish dialect, as Burns called it, was in danger of perishing. Burns seemed at this juncture to start to his feet and reassert Scotland's claim to national existence. His Scottish notes rang through the world, and he thus preserved the Scottish language for ever, for mankind will never let die that idiom in which his songs and poems are enshrined. That is a part of Scotland's debt to Burns." If Scotland to-day has a distinctly national spirit we owe it to Burns, and Scotsmen owe it to his memory to keep alive that spirit by fostering in our universities and schools the study of our national history and literature.

# THE GERMAN INFLUENCE





## CHAPTER XI

### THE GERMAN INFLUENCE

THE deistical school which in religion, philosophy and literature had set the fashion in the eighteenth century, was brought to a dramatic end by the French Revolution. At first sight there seems no connection between the calm, frigid, self-centred life which was the ideal of the eighteenth-century Humanists, and the fierce, tumultuous self-abandonment which characterized the Revolution, and yet they stand related as cause and effect. The Revolution on the intellectual side was the necessary harvest of the seed sown by the Humanist thinkers. Nay, more, the French Revolution drew its inspiration intellectually largely from English sources. In the writings of English and Scottish expounders of Deism were the germs of views of man and society which had only to be passionately adopted by a people of a logical turn of mind in order to bring

about a social convulsion of the most startling kind. The note of Deism was the all-sufficiency of man apart from supernatural aid, and consequently denial of the Calvinistic dogma of the natural depravity of man. For a time these views were contentedly held in harmony with Toryism and found expression in Pope's famous phrase, "Whatever is is best." But when Deism, as in the case of Burns, came into contact with the realities of life, what may be called Tory Quietism was seen to be absurd. If man was naturally good how was the misery of the world to be accounted for? Clearly it was owing to bad institutions. And then we find in the writings of men like Godwin, the poetic discontent of Burns united to a fierce revolutionary political spirit spreading to France, where existing political and social institutions were notoriously out of harmony with the elementary principles of justice. The revolutionary spirit kindled a world-wide conflagration, and in doing so created a violent reaction against the fundamental ideas of the Humanist school. Out of this reaction sprang new conceptions of religion, of man and society, conceptions which coloured the literature

of Scotland and determined the line of its development in the nineteenth century.

It is worthy of notice that, while Scotland's literature in the eighteenth century bore the impress of France, in the reaction which followed the Revolution it bore the impress of Germany. The German mind, as was seen in the case of Goethe, had a strong antipathy to the dreary Materialism of the French thinkers. To escape from it, and from the dreary political and social conditions of the time, the German genius sought refuge in Romanticism in literature, and Idealism in philosophy. These new influences came to Scotland through two writers widely different in genius and temperament—Walter Scott and Thomas Carlyle. Scott began his literary career by translating Bürger's *Lenore*, a spectre ballad, as it has been called, of the violent kind. He also translated Bürger's *The Wild Huntsman* and *Götz von Berlichingen*—pieces which fired his blood and inspired him with the idea of finding in his native land materials for his romantic genius.

It would be manifestly out of place here to enter into criticism of Scott's poems and novels in detail. Sufficient for the present

purpose to note that under the inspiration of the Romantic spirit Scott entirely changed the current of Scotland's literary thought. It was a protest against the revolutionary conception of man and society. As Professor Dowden puts it, with thinkers of the Godwin type, man was denuded of all distinctions. "Man is not conceived as growing out of the past: the heritage from former generations is a heritage of superstition, tyranny, unreason; it exists only to be relinquished or destroyed. The year One has arrived; and the whole world is to be reconstructed, without reference to inheritance or accumulated tendencies on the principles of Reason." We know how furiously Burke fought against this theory, and how valiantly he pleaded for recognition of the truth which to-day finds scientific expression in evolution, that of the continuity of humanity amid great diversities of governments, customs and civilizations. The truths to which Burke gave philosophical expression Scott brought home to the world in a succession of poems and novels which have long since established themselves in the front rank of imaginative literature. From those regions

traduced by the revolutionary thinkers as regions of unreason and superstition, Scott by his magic wand summoned new worlds, and in so doing opened up new intellectual fountains of delight for a humanity which was sick unto death of materialistic theories of man and utilitarian theories of society.

Carlyle has made it a complaint against Scott that he was content with being a mere story-teller, that he had no message to his day and generation. The criticism is not quite fair. In Scott's day there were too many writers with messages. There were theological, philosophical and literary messengers all putting forth their theories of man and his destiny, too often regardless of the real, living, historical man. It was Scott's mission to lift men's minds away from theories and abstractions, and bring them into direct contact with real living men. What Burns did for Nature, Scott did for humanity. Burns drove from the field of poetry the artificial sentiments and mythological conceits of classicism; and Scott banished from the field of history the superficial conceptions of a shallow philosophy and revealed humanity not as an assemblage



of serfs, brutalized by two kindred despots—the king and the priest—but as members of a social order, rough in texture it is true, but linked together by feelings not entirely ignoble and frequently illuminated by the chivalrous and the heroic. On his limitations it is not necessary to dwell. The aim here is chiefly to trace the influence which Scott exerted upon the literature of his country. The total impression of that influence is well summed up in the words of Professor Masson: “Remembering all that Scott has left us—those imperishable tales and romances which no subsequent successes in the British literature of fiction have superseded, and by the genius of which our little ‘land of brown heath and shaggy wood,’ formerly of small account in the world, has become a dream and fascination for all the leisurely of all the nations—need we cease from thinking him in juxtaposition, or on a level at least, with England’s greatest man, the whole world’s greatest man, of the literary order, or abandon the habit of speaking of Sir Walter Scott as our Scottish Shakespear?”

Nor must we overlook the great influence of



Scott in European literature. As the author of the *History of Comparative Literature* says : “ The author of the *Waverley Novels* was for France, as well as England, the founder of the modern novel; he was also one of the reformers of historical writings. Before his time it lacked the dramatic and the picturesque elements. His influence became European, and had its effect in different ways on Manzoni in Italy, Foqué in Germany, and in France on Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, De Vigny, Mériméc, and Balzac and his successors.”

From Germany came, through Carlyle, another influence very different from that of Scott's to give a new direction to Scottish literature. Under the spell of the French Revolution original thinking had been well-nigh suppressed. The *Edinburgh Review* held aloft the torch of literary criticism, but its standards were conventional, and its stimulus to creative thought was slight. Any deep thoughts about man and his destiny the Whig writers had they kept to themselves—hence the singular absence in all their writings of any reference to fundamental questions. Now no great writing is possible unless men are willing to

put into it their deepest thoughts about the great problems of existence, and thus till the advent of Carlyle Scottish literature has no distinctive mark. The writers of the Whigs preserved a judicious silence on all questions bordering on theology and philosophy. Over-awed by the Evangelical party, who, as the result of the French Revolution, had ousted the Moderates in popular influences, the Whigs confined their speculations mainly to political, social and literary questions, and to these they brought no great depth of speculative thought.

Their standards of criticism were, for the most part, conventional. Everything mystical, transcendental and visionary, had to be tried at the bar of worldly common sense, and at that bar was contemptuously dismissed as unworthy of the regard of practical man. In vain the Calvinists thundered the old soul-stirring doctrine of their creed. The men of letters passed by on the other side. Their ideal was a social state in which ruled a well-ordered secularity, in which the deeper passions of the soul and all broodings on the mysterious side of life were sternly kept under control.

Carlyle differed entirely from the Whigs on this point. A Covenanter in temperament, he had the Calvinist tendency to lose himself in contemplation of the Infinite. Man's chief end, in his eyes, did not consist, as it did with the Whig school, in advancing the cause of social order and individual freedom, but in reaching some kind of solution of the great Mystery of Existence which would throw light upon man's relation to God, the universe, and destiny. In form, Carlyle's answers to the great question differed entirely from those of the Scottish Evangelicals, but in spirit he was entirely with them in their protest against the tone and ideals of the Secular school. Scott lifted the minds of his generation away from the meagre utilitarianism of his day by his pictures of a past filled by heroic deeds and soul-stirring episodes. Carlyle tore aside the veil of prosaic conventionality which the devotees of secularity had woven round the nature of man, and revealed man to himself as a being whose thoughts and passions, refusing to be limited by the known, wandered among the Infinite. Under the spell of the Age of Reason man and his dwelling-place had been stripped of

all mystery. Unable to accept the theories of the Church, the thinkers and early writers of the early years of the nineteenth century rested contentedly in a theory of man and Nature in which the supernatural had no place. With them descriptive analysis of man and Nature was accepted as explanation, and where science appeared the old religious emotions of wonder and worship were supposed to flee away.

One has only to open *Sartor Resartus* to see that Carlyle brought into Scottish literature an order of thought and emotions which by their revolutionary nature were calculated to break down the commonplace creed of the Jeffreys, the Macaulays, who had been nurtured on the barren philosophy of Secularism. Carlyle is sometimes spoken of as an importer of German Transcendentalism—a kind of Scottish Coleridge. Had Carlyle been no more than that, his influence would have been evanescent. In Carlyle blended two qualities which made his influence on Scottish literary development far-reaching—the Covenanting spirit and the German philosophic spirit.

It is open to doubt how far Carlyle improved

upon the methods and results of his Covenanting forefathers. He shared with them their soul-torturings, but he did not seem to have gained, like them, those visions of the Islands of the Blest where their spirits in times of direst earthly distresses found rest and peace. Apart from that, Carlyle's methods had a revolutionary effect on the thought of his time. If we have a profounder conception of history than that of Macaulay; if our critical standards in literature are immeasurably higher than those of Jeffrey; if our social ideals strike a more humanitarian note than those of the old economists; if our philosophy is more idealistic than that of the systems which were popularized by the Moderate school; if, in a word, the Scottish thought of to-day has burst its narrow parochial bonds—to Thomas Carlyle is mainly due the honour of the great transformation.





# THE EVOLUTION OF FICTION



## CHAPTER XII

### THE EVOLUTION OF FICTION

WITH the suppression of the rising of the '45 the history of Scotland, from a purely national point of view, may be said to come to an end. The Rebellion was something more than an attempt to restore the Stewart dynasty. It was the dramatic and final stage in the inevitable conflict between two antagonistic ideals—the feudal and the industrial. At the Union Scotland had entered into partnership with England in commerce and industry; but sentiment dies hard, and many, while alive to the superiority of the new days, gazed regretfully upon the days which were vanishing. At the Union Scotland gained much, but it paid a heavy price in the loss of its individuality, which meant the loss of the sharp dramatic contrasts and the vivid heroisms which make the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries illustrious.



From a literary point of view the Union was not wholly beneficial. In its backward state, intellectually, Scotland was compelled to go for light and leading to France and England, and thus the leading spirits of the nation were divorced from the aspirations and ideals of the common people. Burns provoked a reaction which was sustained by Scott. Carlyle contributed to the patriotic spirit by his sympathetic interpretation of the religious side of the national life; though at the same time, by introducing the German element, he helped to lead the Scottish mind out of the parochial into the cosmopolitan arena.

After Burns, Scott and Carlyle we find a change coming over Scottish literature. The national spirit grew less and less pronounced under the influence of commerce, industry, and the gradual spread of the English language and manners; and history clearly shows that with the decay of nationalism literature also decays. Scott could have no successor; he exhausted the past and gave no guidance to the literary interpretation of the future; and Carlyle found an outlet for his genius in other than Scottish spheres of thought and activity.

The result of the Union from a literary point of view was that Scotland presented to her men of genius no self-centred, self-developing national life which by appealing to their imagination could result in a new form of truly national literature. Genius there was in abundance, but it spent itself mainly in microscopic efforts, in detailed pictures of Scottish life; not in focusing and giving literary expression to the thoughts and ideals of a people bound together by unity of national feeling and purpose, but in describing life as it was, or in sentimental handling of bygone times.

In the great mass of Jacobite literature we have enshrined in poetic forms of a high order the sentimental side of Scotland; and in the domestic novel we find the national genius seeking the outlet which was denied in the higher region of nationality. In the absence of a real national life, creative genius of the highest order is impossible, and thus we are prepared to find in the literature of Scotland from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards—with the exception of Carlyle's writings—an absence of soul-stirring originality.

We have literature represented mainly by the talented but not original writers who grouped themselves round the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. We are all proud of Christopher North, Jeffrey, Lockhart, and the others who held aloft the torch of literature in the early years of the nineteenth century, but in reading their writings we do not feel as if we were breathing the atmosphere of genius. Literature in their hands was controversial, and had nothing in it distinctively Scottish. With the decay of national feeling there was bound also to come a fall in the Scottish mental temperature, which showed itself in the rise of a kind of fictional literature far removed from the Romanticism of Scott. Thus we have the rise of the domestic novel, which in the case of Miss Ferrier gave scope for microscopic character-sketching and satirical treatment of common life as mirrored in the middle classes. Then we have the realistic novel, as represented by Galt, in which, as in the *Annals of the Parish*, we no longer deal with human nature on the heroic side, but are introduced to the grimly tragic side of prosaic existence.



In poetry the tone is the same. We find abundance of talent and streaks of genius in the poets who come after Burns. We have descriptive, sentimental, heroic, and other kinds of poetry; but it remains unread, except by the diligent student. Who, for instance, now reads Wilson's *The Isle of Palms*, or Aytoun's poems—with perhaps the exception of the *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*—not to mention the large army of authors who disported themselves in verse during the nineteenth century?

With the appearance of Robert Louis Stevenson it seemed as if Scottish literature was once more to strike the note of distinction. About Stevenson's genius there can be no dispute; and had he lived in an earlier time, when it was possible for him to be haunted by great ideals and inspired by deep emotions, he would have taken a place not far below Scott. A greater artist in the technical sense than Scott, he failed just where Scott was strong. Scott flung himself upon life with a hearty objectivity. Stevenson, no doubt largely owing to ill-health, and to the decay of religious belief, was lacking in the mental healthiness which is

necessary in a genius of the first rank. Persistent introspection is fatal to success as a novelist, and Stevenson was chronically introspective. His insight into Scottish character was profound, his skill at portraiture undisputed, but the reader longs to get away from the hothouse atmosphere of Stevenson to the mountain breezes of Scott. Still, we must not forget to credit Stevenson with a distinct vein of originality. He was a disciple of Scott the Romanticist, though with Stevenson the spirit of romance was not, as with Scott, epochal in its sweep and influence. Scott's romance was inspired by the historic and the heroic, supplemented by a genius for character creation which links his name with that of Shakespeare. Stevenson's romance was inspired not by the historic spirit, but by the purely human spirit. In one of his essays Stevenson defines the highest achievement of romance to be the embodiment "of character, thought or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye." In this kind of romance Stevenson excelled, and in order to work with effect, he calls into play the weird, the terrible, the blood-curdling, the supernatural.

One result of dealing with out-of-the-way characters and incidents is that in the reader's mind Stevenson is constantly identified with his characters; the reader never loses a vivid sense of the author's personality. This, while pleasing in a sense, is a sign of limitation, of a self-consciousness which we do not find in the highest order of genius. With longer life Stevenson would probably have worked clear of the affectations which hampered his genius, but as it is his writings are a unique product in the literature of his native land.

There are those who bluntly declare that Scottish fiction has no future. In these days nationalism as applied to the things of the mind is said to be losing its power. Cosmopolitan influences are gaining so rapidly upon nationalism that the parochial field, with its strongly marked individualities and quaint manners, is no longer available for the novelist. We are just now suffering from a return of the ideas which were so popular about the time of the French Revolution, when it was held as an accepted dogma that all the differences among mankind were due to circumstances and education. Give men equal

education, social and political opportunities, and the differences which distinguish mankind, and which we attribute to race and nationality, would disappear. This revival of the equality dogma of the French Revolution receives plausible sanction from science, which as a civilizing influence is undoubtedly breaking down barriers of distance and such-like obstacles to the fusion of races. On the other hand, science from another point of view is a foe to the new idea of equality and the transformation of humanity under the sway of educational, industrial and political influences. If science has shown us the variability of all life and its modifiability it also emphasizes the elements of heredity and continuity by which the stability of species is secured. The school of the French Revolutionists, which attributed almost everything to environmental influences, has given place as a result of the doctrine of evolution to the modern school, which holds that each people possesses a national constitution as unaltering as its anatomical characteristics, which is the source of its sentiments, thoughts, institutions, beliefs, and arts. From this point of view it will be

seen how superficial is the belief that because Scotland and England were united politically two hundred years ago, and have since been subjected to the same general influences, therefore the two nations are so identical that there is no room for the development of separate literatures. Is it conceivable that the intellectual and moral characteristics of a people which have come to them from a long past age are to be set aside by a mere change of legislative machinery? Now and again circumstances arise which seem to favour the equality idea. Under the spell of imitation one nation or the leading section of a nation may, as in Scotland at the time of the Moderates, endeavour to copy the literary ideas and methods of other nations, but in the end race reasserts itself, and a national literature is the result. Burns and Scott represent in Scottish literature the reassertion of the national spirit as opposed to the cosmopolitan; and there is no reason why in our own day, even in the midst of influences which make for the obliteration of national distinctions, Scotland should not reassert once more her individuality in literature, particularly in fiction.



Granted that Scottish fiction has a future, the question arises: What particular form is it likely to take? Novel-writers have been divided into two classes, Idealists and Realists. At best the division is a rough one. There is nothing in the nature of things to prevent a writer being at once an Idealist and a Realist. He may, like Scott, weave a world of romance and at the same time give realistic pictures of life. Still the distinction within limits is a real one. We call a writer a Realist who confines himself to delineating character and manners as he finds them existing around him. We call him an Idealist when his characters, or at least his principal characters, embody a higher type of life; and we call him a Romanticist when he transports his readers from the commonplace life of to-day to the idealized world of the past. Now, as a rule, it will be found that in fictional literature the law of action and reaction holds sway. For instance, the novels of Scott were part of the reaction against the ideal of the French Revolution. The thinkers of the Revolution held fast by the doctrine of the equality of man, the iniquity of Government, and the hideousness of the



past, which to them was simply the result of superstition and despotism. The past deserved to be blotted out ; the year of the Revolution was the year One. Such a theory of life confined literature within very narrow limits. It killed Romanticism by clipping the wings of Imagination. Resting on a materialistic theory of life, it confined men's thoughts and aspirations to the seen and tangible ; it made no provision for the higher aspirations of the soul. In fiction Scott was the most prominent figure in the reaction. Scott did not neglect the present, but his method did not permit him to deal with the collective life of the present. Unrivalled in delineating the character of individuals, he did not essay a picture of village life in the Scotland of his own time. That demanded a more microscopic form of genius than Scott possessed. He himself somewhere speaks of his " bow-wow " style.

In Galt we have represented the realistic side of Scottish village life. In the *Annals of the Parish* we have a lifelike picture of Scotland in the transition stage, the beginning of the new industrial period. The rise of the

new era, with its influence on the sentiments, imagination, and feelings of the people, is given in a few masterly strokes which, while clearly realistic, have none of the forbidding realism of Zola. It is astonishing that Galt has had no real successor. He created a new school, and everything seemed favourable to the new departure. Instead of Scottish novelists utilizing the common people, they have shown a preference for dealing with certain select classes of the community. Susan Ferrier, for example, took for her sphere the higher middle-class element. Sharply tinctured with the feudalism of the law and with marvellous power, she put them under the microscope. Mrs. Oliphant, though different in spirit and method, followed much the same plan. Coming nearer our own time we find the ecclesiastical and religious side of life powerfully attracting our novelists. George Macdonald was the novelist of the reaction against Calvinism, and naturally his limitation of aim limited his influence. J. M. Barrie and Ian Maelaren have left us remarkable portraits, antique specimens of Scottish Dissenting life, but these are snapshots, not

elaborately finished pictures. The "Kailyard school," profiting by the interest which Barrie created, wove their plots so completely round ecclesiastical subjects that it seemed as if Scottish life was bounded on the one side by ordination dinners, and on the other by church soirées. This school had not in it the roots of permanence. It represented a temporary yearning in the public mind for an ideal element in Scottish fiction. Weary of the realism of life, as revealed in the newspaper press, the public readily snatch at anything which leads the mind into the region of the poetic and the sentimental. Mr. J. M. Barrie began idealizing certain phases of Scottish ecclesiastical and religious life, and by his inimitable genius the popularity of the new school was secured. But abiding popularity cannot possibly be predicted of the "Kailyard school." In truth, the task they undertook was begun long years before by a writer of greater genius—George MacDonald, whose shoe-latchet the Kailyarders are not worthy to unloose. There is more hope of the Celtic revival as evidenced by a writer like Neil Munro, whose insight into the Highland character, and sympathy with the

weird mysticism of the Celt, give to his writings a depth and reality which his predecessor William Black did not possess. A reaction against the sentimentalism of the Kailyarders was soon to come, and it came with the publication of *The House with the Green Shutters*, a book of terrific power, in which rural life, character and manners are depicted with a fierce gloominess, a persistent cynicism, and a sustained sordidness that remind the reader of Zola. Not only was the novel very defective from the side of art, but in addition the author neglected to use the opportunity which came to his hand.

Modern Scottish life in its commoner aspects has for some time been waiting for adequate fictional treatment. In this respect we are far behind England, where the various aspects of the national development, social, political and industrial, have been worked into fiction. Dickens, as a reaction against the romantic mood, utilized the humanitarian wave which passed over England in the middle of the last century, while Charles Kingsley made capital out of religious scepticism and the social and economic problems of the Victorian period. How comes it that in these fields Scottish

fiction has been sterile ? Never, surely, was there ampler material for a successful Scottish novel on new lines. In the olden days, when the conditions of life were stable, novelists like Miss Ferrier were limited in their scope of treatment. The reader's interest centred on the development and play of character, the plot being more or less a conventional affair. Under modern conditions the field of the novelist is greatly increased. We are in the midst of an industrial revolution, under which human conditions have lost their stability and assume a seeming arbitrariness which frequently plunges multitudes into poverty and despair. Economic changes at the other side of the globe have greater effect on the happiness of humanity at home than the most destructive of wars. Now more than at any period of history, in consequence of the complexity and instability of commercial and industrial conditions, the deepest feelings of human beings are in a constant state of tragic turmoil. Men's desires have increased at a greater rate than the power of satisfying them. The tragedy is all the greater when it is considered that just when the material conditions of life are so



unstable the modern desire for material happiness has become more intense. In old days, when religion was a power in Scotland, material prosperity in the form of accumulated wealth did not wholly absorb the mind, and poverty did not seem to be the one unutterable woe. With the decay of religious belief and of church authority,<sup>1</sup> society has no higher aim than worldly success, which takes the form of an inordinate thirst for wealth and for the grosser pleasures which wealth can buy. Increased leisure, so far as the people are concerned, is mainly devoted to sordid pleasures; and thus we have a social state characterized by great economic inequalities, and to masses of sordid poverty, giving birth to Socialism, with its gospel of discontent. On the intellectual side we have scepticism, with a lowering of ideals manifesting itself in the lower orders in a painful, dreary social life; in the middle classes in sheer Philistinism; and in the upper classes in worship at the shrine of pleasure. Modern Scotland is unfavourable to the rise

<sup>1</sup> See the remarkable volume recently published, *Non-Churchgoing*, edited by W. Forbes-Gray (Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier).



of literature of the highest kind, whether of the Romantic or Idealistic type. We need a literature which will not flatter our national vanity nor throw a halo round our national materialism, but which will picture Scottish life as it really is. The complexity of modern life, the feverish struggle for existence and success, the thirst for pleasure, the disintegration of religious beliefs, the smug respectability of the middle classes, the Socialistic aspirations of the working classes, the awful contrast between riches and poverty—these things, which characterize the Scotland of to-day, afford ample scope for a Scottish novelist who has the courage not to pander to the sentimental side of his countrymen, but resolutely to paint a true picture of the time.

Such a picture would reveal the extent to which Scotland has fallen below the ideals of the great leaders of the past. The Reformers, Moderates, and Covenanters differed seriously on fundamental questions, but in one thing they were agreed—they sought, according to their lights, to train their fellow-countrymen to face worthily the great problem of life. In order to do that, it is essential that the pilgrim should

be provided with a chart by means of which he will have a clear conception of the journey, and so avoid the pitfalls which exist for the ignorant and the unwary. The Reformers and Covenanters do not commend themselves to the modern apostles of culture, but in their day and generation they did noble work for Scotland, simply because they had a definite theory of life, which satisfied their intelligence and inspired them to heroic deeds. The Moderates, too, though looking askance at what they considered the fanaticism of the "zealots," treated life as a solemn trust, and from their own standpoint, as in the case of thinkers like Hutcheson, were able to construct for their intellectual satisfaction a full-orbed system of philosophy. We have drifted far from the creed of the Reformers and Covenanters, and science, with its stern teachings, prevents us taking refuge in the optimistic Deism which satisfied the Moderates. The modern mind in Scotland, as elsewhere, tends to rest in Indifference, which is the congenial soil, not of heroism, but, according to individual temperament, of sombre stoicism or riotous epicureanism. One thing is plain—Scotland must sink into a

materialistic view of life unless it can get beyond this standpoint. Let it be understood that life is an insoluble riddle, man's pilgrimage an aimless wandering among fogs and quagmires, and the result will be materialism in creed and conduct. Science left to itself tends to materialism, but under the magic touch of religion and philosophy it is capable of subordinating material resources to ideal ends. The intellectual task before the Scotland of to-day is the construction of a creed in which the materialism which science brings with it will unite with the idealism of religion, philosophy and literature in so raising the tone of the national life that, in the firmament of history, the Scotland of the future will shine with as great a lustre as the Scotland of the past.



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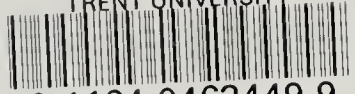
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